



A candlelight vigil at the St. Rose of Lima Church for the victims of a shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School, in Newtown, Conn., Dec. 14, 2012. A gunman killed 26 people, 20 of them children, in a shooting on Friday morning at the elementary school, authorities said.

(Richard Perry/The New York Times)

Nation struggles with Conn. school rampage

JOHN CHRISTOFFERSEN

Associated Press

NEWTOWN, Connecticut

(AP) — A man killed his mother at home and then opened fire Friday inside the elementary school where she taught, massacring 26 people, including 20 young children, as youngsters cowered in their classrooms and trembled helplessly to the sound of gunfire reverberating through the building.

The 20-year-old killer, carrying two handguns, committed suicide at the school,

bringing the toll to 28, authorities said.

The rampage in the northeastern state of Connecticut was at least the fourth big shooting spree in five months in the United States. It was by far the deadliest of the year and most heart-wrenching.

The children were among the youngest victims of a mass shooting in recent history.

Frightened students who were rushed from the building by police were told to close their eyes. Children

— some crying, others looking frightened — were escorted through a parking lot in a line, hands on each other's shoulders.

"Our hearts are broken today," President Barack Obama said, wiping his eyes during brief comments to reporters in one of the most emotional public moments of his presidency. The children killed were just 5 to 10 years old, he said. "They had their entire lives ahead of them — birthdays, graduations, wedding, kids of their own."

The national debate over the issue of gun control in America exploded once again.

Obama said the U.S. had been "through this too many times" with recent mass shootings and that the country has to come together to take meaningful action, "regardless of the politics." He did not give details.

Police shed no light on the motive for the attack. The gunman was believed to suffer from a personality disorder and lived with his

mother in Connecticut, said a law enforcement official who was briefed on the investigation but was not authorized to publicly discuss it.

Law enforcement officials speaking on condition of anonymity said Adam Lanza killed his mother, Nancy Lanza, and then drove to the school in her car with three guns, including a high-powered rifle that he apparently left in the back.

Continued on Page 5

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Christmas comes to Vatican with traditional tree lighting

NICOLE WINFIELD
Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The

Christmas season kicked off Friday at the Vatican with the traditional lighting of

the tree in St. Peter's Square — and a reminder from the pope about what hap-



The 24 meters (78.74 feet) Christmas tree is lit in St. Peter's square at the Vatican, Friday, Dec. 14, 2012. The Christmas season kicks off Friday at the Vatican with the traditional lighting of the tree in St. Peter's Square — and a reminder from the Pope about what happened when the "lights" of God were turned off in past atheistic regimes.

(AP Photo/Gregorio Borgia)

pened when the "lights" of God were turned off in past atheistic regimes. Benedict XVI, 85, occasionally refers to his experiences as a devout young Catholic in Nazi Germany in pressing his case for Europe to recover its Christian heritage and reassert its faith in everyday life. In comments to a delegation from Italy's south-central Molise region, which donated the Vatican's main Christmas tree this year, Benedict said the tree lights that were being turned on at a ceremony

early Friday evening represented "divine light." "And when in the past they tried to stamp out the light of God to instead turn on illusory and misleading glows, there were seasons of tragic violence against man," he said. "And this is because when they tried to cancel God's name from the pages of history, the result was a distortion, where even the most noble and beautiful words, like 'freedom,' 'common good' and 'justice' ... lost their true meaning." □

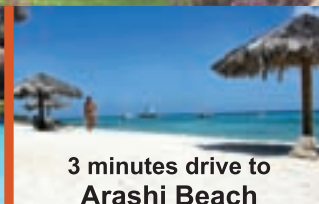
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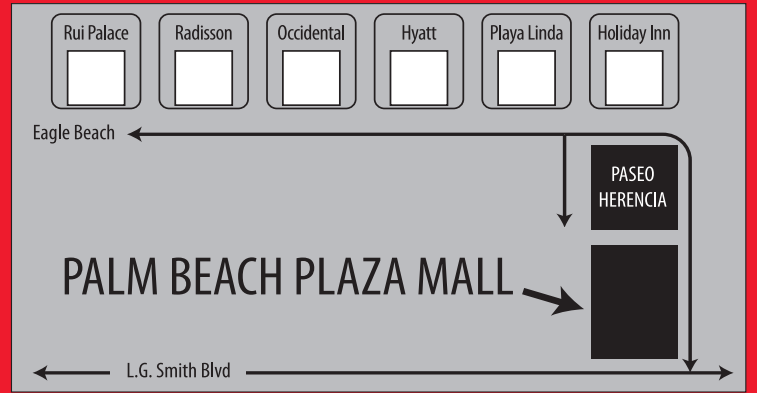


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New calls for gun control in wake of Connecticut shootings

DAN FREEDMAN

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WASHINGTON — The shooting deaths in Newtown, Conn., reignited the long-simmering debate over the place of firearms in American society, with gun control advocates and political leaders calling for open discussion of solutions to random gun violence but stopping short of calls for sweeping new legislation. "I hope and trust that in the next session of Congress there will be sustained and thoughtful debate about America's gun culture and our responsibility to prevent more loss of life," said Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., author of the 1994 assault weapons ban, which lapsed in 2004. President Obama brushed away tears as he offered condolences to the families of the 26 victims, 20 of them children. "We're going to have to

come together and take meaningful action to prevent more tragedies like this, regardless of the politics," the president said. The assault weapons ban outlawed 19 types of military-style rifles as well as high-capacity ammunition magazines. Feinstein has called for re-introduction

of an "updated" assault weapons ban. And President Obama said during a presidential debate that he wants "a broader conversation" on gun violence that would include "seeing if we can get an assault weapons ban reintroduced."

But the ban, anathema to

the National Rifle Association and many if not most gun owners, was not the focal point Friday of Feinstein, Obama or even stalwart gun-control organizations such as the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence.

"We're a better country than this," said Brian Malte, the Brady campaign's director of network mobilization. "We're optimistic that the American people have had enough. We're optimistic the American public wants to have this conversation, that voices of Americans will be heard throughout the country after what happened today."

Indeed, within hours of the Newtown shootings, six petitions appeared on the White House's website calling for the president to address issues related to mass shootings. All the petitions had at least 200 signatures, and one had garnered

more than 5,000.

Gun-rights advocates for the most part were mute. The NRA did not return a phone call seeking comment.

The National Shooting Sports Foundation, the trade organization for U.S. gun manufacturers, importers, wholesalers and retailers, has its headquarters in Newtown. It released a statement saying "our hearts go out to the families of the victims of this horrible tragedy in our community." But spokesman Michael Bazinet declined further comment "out of respect for the families, the community and the ongoing police investigation."

Conservative radio commentator Rush Limbaugh said that though the shootings were "terrible, incomprehensible," liberals would try "to find a way to blame this on conservatives or Republicans." □



Gun control demonstrators Fabiola Cordova, Chris Homan, and his son Leo, 2, attend a candlelight vigil in front of the White House in Washington, Friday, Dec. 14, 2012, after a school shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Ct.
(AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin)

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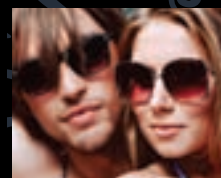
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In this photo provided by the Newtown Bee, Connecticut State Police lead a line of children from the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn. on Friday, Dec. 14, 2012 after a shooting at the school.

(AP Photo/Shannon Hicks)

Continued from front

Authorities said he shot up two classrooms but otherwise gave no details on how the attack unfolded. The attack at Sandy Hook Elementary School, just two weeks before Christmas, was the nation's second-deadliest school shooting, exceeded only by the Virginia Tech university massacre in 2007 that left 32 dead. This time, the victims were far smaller. Children told their parents they had heard bangs and, at one point, a scream over the intercom. Teachers ordered them to hide in closets or corners. State police Lt. Paul Vance said 28 people in all were killed, including the gunman, and one person was injured. Lanza's older brother, 24-year-old Ryan, of Hoboken, N.J., was being ques-

tioned, but a law enforcement official said he was not believed to have had any role in the rampage. Investigators were searching his computers and phone records, but he told law enforcement he had not been in touch with his brother since about 2010. The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak on the record about the unfolding investigation. Adam Lanza and his mother lived in a well-to-do part of Newtown where neighbors are doctors or hold white-collar positions at companies such as General Electric, Pepsi and IBM. Three guns were found — a Glock and a Sig Sauer, both pistols, inside the school, and a .223-caliber rifle in the back of a car. The shooting shocked a tranquil community of 27,000 people in one of the

Gunman kills 26, self at US school

wealthiest counties in the U.S., about 60 miles (96 kilometers) northeast of New York City.

On Friday afternoon, family members were led away from a firehouse that was being used as a staging area, some of them weeping. One man, wearing only a T-shirt without a jacket, put his arms around a woman as they walked down the middle of the street, oblivious to everything

around them.

Another woman with tears rolling down her face walked by carrying a car seat with a young infant inside and a bag that appeared to have toys and stuffed animals.

Robert Licata said his 6-year-old son was in class when the gunman burst in and shot the teacher.

"That's when my son grabbed a bunch of his friends and ran out the

door," he said. "He was very brave. He waited for his friends."

Licata said the shooter didn't say a word.

Stephen Delgiadice said his 8-year-old daughter heard two big bangs, and teachers told her to get in a corner. His daughter was fine.

"It's alarming, especially in Newtown, Connecticut, which we always thought was the safest place in America," he said. □



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Pot proponents hopeful, wary after Obama comments

MANUEL VALDES
KRISTEN WYATT
Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Officials and pot advocates looking for any sign of whether the Obama administration will sue to block legal pot laws in Washington state and Colorado or stand idly by as they are implemented got one from the president himself.

But it did little to clear the air. While they welcomed President Barack Obama's comments that catching pot users was a low priority for his administration, they said it didn't answer a bigger question: Will federal prosecutors and drug agents also look the other way?

Pot advocates say they are leery since previous state-

ments from the administration that it wouldn't go after individual medical marijuana users was followed by crackdowns on dispens-



Gerald Thompson holds up a bag of marijuana on the steps of the State Capitol in Denver.

(AP Photo/The Denver Post, Aaron Ontiveroz)

saries and others who grew and sold the pot.

"There's some signal of

hope," said Alison Holcomb, who led Washington's legalization drive, but added that it will take more than the president to clarify

the issues around legal pot. "We ultimately need a legislative resolution."

In an interview with Barba-

ra Walters scheduled to air on ABC on Friday, Obama said that going after "recreational users" would not be a "top priority" in the two states, where voters legalized pot use in November. In his comments, the president didn't specifically address how the federal government would respond to state officials in Washington and Colorado, who are beginning work on regulations for commercial pot sales. Under the laws, possession of up to an ounce of pot is legal for adults over 21.

The Justice Department has declined to say whether it would file a lawsuit to block the laws, but has said marijuana is still illegal under federal law.

Tom Angell of the group Marijuana Majority said Obama's comment didn't

add anything new. He said the federal government rarely goes after users and the president can do more besides passing the responsibility to Congress.

Angell said Obama can use executive power to reclassify pot as a legal drug. Federal prosecutors haven't targeted users in the 18 states and Washington, D.C. that allow people to use marijuana for medical reasons. However, federal agents have still cracked down on dozens of dispensaries in some of those states. U.S. Rep. Suzan DelBene, D-Wash., said Obama's statements weren't definitive but could be a sign that the federal government might be willing to work with the states to develop a new regulatory model for marijuana. □

2 dozen charged in US-Mexico meth border smuggling scheme

ELLIOT SPAGAT
Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — More than two dozen people were charged in what authorities said Friday was a window into an emerging Mexican drug cartel's efforts to smuggle massive amounts of methamphetamine into California.

The charges were part of a 21-month investigation targeting the Knights Templar cartel. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration said the investigation has resulted in seizures of more than 1,000 pounds (453 kilograms) of methamphetamine, 200 pounds (91 kilograms) of cocaine, 28 pounds (12.7 kilograms) of heroin, 320 pounds (145 kilograms) of marijuana and \$200,000 cash.

The San Diego County

district attorney's office charged 28 people with drug-related crimes, including 16 who were arrested this week. The other 12 were at-large.

Another 40 people were previously arrested in California as part of the investigation, said DEA spokeswoman Amy Roderick.

"Drugs and money were found hidden in cars, taped to people's bodies, stashed in people's homes and buried in people's backyards," said District Attorney Bonnie Dumanis.

Knights Templar is a quasi-religious cartel known as a major trafficker of methamphetamine. Based in central Mexico's Michoacan state, it formed about two years ago from a splinter group of La Familia Michoacana when that cartel's

leadership was annihilated by the Mexican government.

"These guys are turning into the largest distributors of methamphetamine (in the U.S.)," said Stephen Tomaski, the DEA's assistant special agent in charge in San Diego.

Knights Templar and Sinaloa are the two main Mexican cartels operating in the smuggling corridor of Tijuana, Mexico, and San Diego, Tomaski said.

Methamphetamine is often smuggled in cars through San Diego's San Ysidro and Otay Mesa ports of entry, DEA officials said.

Authorities refused to discuss the alleged roles of any defendant. The DEA's Tomaski said they "coordinated loads of massive amounts of drugs." □

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Holiday shoppers may see huge discounts soon

ANNE D'NNOCENZIO MAE ANDERSON
Associated Press
NEW YORK (AP) — If shoppers don't show up in stores soon, more "70 percent off" sale signs will. After a promising start to the holiday shopping season over the four-day Thanksgiving weekend, sales have slowed, according to an analysis of data done for The Associated Press by

iPad Mini tablet computer for his two young children. Antonette stopped shopping after spending \$1,000 over fears that Congress and the White House won't reach a budget deal by January. A stalemate would trigger tax increases and spending cuts known as the "fiscal cliff." "I basically stopped moving forward in buying," said Antonette, 44, who

said it would lead them to cut back their holiday buying, he said. Overall, holiday sales are up 2.2 percent to \$659 billion from Nov. 1 through last Saturday, according to ShopperTrak, a Chicago-based firm that tracks spending at 40,000 stores across the country. That's slightly below the 2.7 percent increase over the Thanksgiving weekend when shop-

pers spent \$22 billion. The modest increase means sales for rest of the season will be crucial for stores, which make as much as 40 percent of their annual revenue in November and December. With only about a week and a half left until Christmas, stores have a ways to go in order to reach ShopperTrak's forecast of a 3.3 percent rise in sales during the two-month stretch compared with the same period last year. It's like the ghost of Christmas past has returned for stores. In order to salvage the season, they may be forced to offer the kind of heavy discounts that helped boost sales last year, but that also ate away at their profits. That's something stores have tried to resist all season: Promotions are down 5 percent so far this season compared with last year, according to BMO Capital, which tracks promotions at about two-thirds of mall stores. To be sure, there still are plenty of 30, 40 and 50 percent off sale signs in store windows. But stores also have been doing more creative things with pricing to get shoppers to think

they're getting a better deal than they really are. Think: Offering jeans for \$9 instead of \$9.99, hoping round numbers will appeal more to shoppers, or selling two shirts for \$20 instead of giving shoppers 20 percent off. "The retailing nation is trying to get off the discounting habit," said Paco Underhill, founder of Envirosell, which studies consumer behavior. "It's just like heroin — the more you do it the more you need to do it." The fact that stores are struggling to find the right balance between pricing and profits during the holiday season is no surprise. □



Shoppers walk past holiday decorations at the Downtown Crossing in Boston. After a promising start to the holiday shopping season over the four-day Thanksgiving weekend, sales have slowed, according to an analysis of data done for The Associated Press by sales tracker ShopperTrak. (AP Photo/Charles Krupa)

sales tracker ShopperTrak. Worries about weak U.S. job growth and other concerns are likely to blame for Americans spending less. That puts pressure on J.C. Penney, Macy's and other stores, which had been offering fewer discounts this season than they did last year, to step up promotions to lure shoppers like Ron Antonette from Long Beach, Calif. Antonette so far has spent about half of what he planned to spend during this holiday season on gifts such as Legos, a Wii U game console and Apple's

runs a small public relations business and worries that he might not be able to take mortgage deductions on his house next year. "I feel like we're in financial limbo." Antonette isn't the only shopper who feels that way. Major stores don't discuss sales during the holiday shopping season, but Wal-Mart CEO Mike Duke said during a speech in New York City on Tuesday that a recent poll of shoppers of the world's largest retailer found that an overwhelming majority are aware of the threat of higher taxes. And some

pers spent \$22 billion. The modest increase means sales for rest of the season will be crucial for stores, which make as much as 40 percent of their annual revenue in November and December. With only about a week and a half left until Christmas, stores have a ways to go in order to reach ShopperTrak's forecast of a 3.3 percent rise in sales during the two-month stretch compared with the same period last year. It's like the ghost of Christmas past has returned for stores. In order to salvage

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Heated clashes ahead of vote on Egypt charter

MAGGIE MICHAEL
SARAH EL DEEB
Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Waving swords and clubs, Islamist supporters of Egypt's draft constitution clashed with opponents in the Mediterranean port city of Alexandria on Friday as tempers flared on the eve of the referendum on the disputed charter — the country's worst political crisis since the ouster of Hosni Mubarak. Both sides stepped up their campaigns after weeks of violence and harsh divisions that have turned Saturday's vote into a fight over Egypt's post-revolutionary identity. Highlighting the tension that may lie ahead, nearly 120,000 army soldiers will deploy to protect polling stations. A radical Islamist group also said it will send its own members to defend the stations alongside the army and police.

The referendum pits Egypt's newly empowered Islamists against liberals, many apolitical Christians and secular-leaning Muslims. President Mohammed Morsi's supporters say the constitution will help end the political instabil-

ity that has gripped Egypt since February 2011, when the autocratic Mubarak was overthrown in a popular uprising. Clerics, using mosque pulpits, defend the constitution as championing Islam. Morsi's opponents say minority concerns have

dermine labor unions. They charge the constitution will enslave Egyptians. Critics have raised concern over the legitimacy of the document after most judges said they would not supervise the vote. Rights groups warned of opportunities for widespread fraud,

The opposition coalition, the National Salvation Front, again called on Morsi, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, to postpone the referendum and form a new assembly to draft a new constitution.

"History will remember that this regime forced a referendum on the people of Egypt in these harsh circumstances," said Ahmed Said, leader of the liberal Free Egyptians Party. "They can't find judges to monitor, (there is a) rift among Egyptians and blood on the streets." Islamist members of the panel that drafted the constitution held a last-minute conference to defend it, accusing their rivals of spreading "lies" and causing strife.

"This is political blackmail," said Amr Darrag, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood's political arm, the Freedom and Justice party, as well as of the panel that drafted the constitution.

More than 26 million voters are scheduled to cast

their ballots Saturday, in a vote that has been staggered over two weeks. Another 25 million will vote next week.

TV stations ran rival ad campaigns — one supporting a "yes" vote for the sake of stability, another advocating a "no" vote to avoid a constitution that would divide Egypt.

"We ask people to make up their minds and decide ... and go vote," Darrag told state TV. Gaber Nassar, a liberal member of the panel who withdrew just before it approved the draft, said the document is flawed and charts a path for repression.

"This is a document that enslaves the Egyptian people, a document of repression," Nassar, a constitutional law expert, told a news conference. Thousands of Islamists filled a square in eastern Cairo, raising pictures of Morsi. A few kilometers (miles) away, the opposition chanted for a "no" vote in a sit-in outside the presidential palace. Liberal groups sent vehicles mounted with loudspeakers urging voters to cross "no" in their ballots. □



Opponents of Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi hold pamphlets urging a "no vote" on a constitutional referendum as cars burn during clashes between supporters and opponents of President Mohammed Morsi in Alexandria, Egypt, Friday, Dec. 14, 2012, a day before the referendum on the constitution. (AP Photo)

been ignored and the charter is full of obscurely worded clauses that could allow Islamists to restrict civil liberties, ignore women's rights and un-

and the opposition said a decision to stretch the vote two rounds to make up for the shortage of judges left the door open for initial results to sway voter opinions.

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As rebels close in, Assad still has cards to play

ELIZABETH A. KENNEDY

Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — With rebels trying to penetrate Syria's capital, Damascus, President Bashar Assad may appear to be heading for a last stand as his weakened regime crumbles around him.

But the Syrian leader is not necessarily on his way out just yet.

He still has thousands of loyal troops and a monopoly on air power. A moribund diplomatic process has given him room to maneuver despite withering international condemnation. And the power of Islamic extremists among the rebels is dashing hopes that the West will help turn the tide of the civil war by sending heavy weapons to the opposition.

"The West, for all its rhetorical bombast, has restricted the flow of important weapons," said University of Oklahoma professor Joshua Landis, who runs an influential blog called Syria Comment. "They have not brought down this regime because

they are frightened of the alternative."

There is no appetite for intervening actively against

risk of having him replaced by an Islamist regime hostile to the West. Those concerns have deepened af-

in Egypt where a bid to promote an Islamist agenda threatens to tear the nation apart.

has been Syria's key protector at the U.N. Security Council, where Moscow has used its veto power to shield Damascus from world sanctions. On Friday, Russia distanced itself from a statement by its Middle East envoy, who said a day earlier that Assad is losing control and the rebels may win. During a reign of more than 40 years, the Assad family has built a powerful military and paramilitary force controlled by fellow members of their Alawite sect who are committed to maintaining the once-marginalized religious minority and its allies in power.

While the opposition is making significant gains, the forces propping up the regime are far from spent. For many of them, defeat would mean not only the end of Assad but an existential threat by vengeful rebel forces. Some observers believe the die-hard loyalists around Assad — a man who has vowed to live and die in Syria, despite the uprising — may not allow him to abandon ship, even if he wanted to. □



Syrian President Bashar Assad attends a ceremony to mark the 38th anniversary of the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war, in Damascus, Syria. Assad still has thousands of elite and loyal troops behind him, and analysts say that even if he wanted to give up the fight, it's unclear those around him would let him abandon ship and leave them to an uncertain fate. (AP Photo/SANA)

Assad — as NATO did against Moammar Gadhafi in Libya — and run the

ter the attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, Libya, and political turmoil

Also working in Syria's favor is its alliance with Russia, which could be losing faith in Assad but will probably not abandon him. Russia

China:

Communist Party chief to bolster military

EDWARD WONG

© 2012 New York Times

GUANGZHOU, China — Xi Jinping, the new Communist Party chief and civilian commander of the Chinese military, is moving quickly to make strengthening the country's armed forces a centerpiece of what he calls the "Chinese dream" of national rejuvenation.

The nationalist message of building up the People's Liberation Army has been broadcast loudly in the aftermath of Xi's recent visit to south China. The trip, which began Dec. 7, was Xi's first outside Beijing as party chief and is now being examined

for his policy priorities. This week, the state news media gave prominent coverage to Xi's visit with troops of the Guangzhou military region, including a trip aboard the Haikou, a destroyer that belongs to the fleet patrolling disputed waters in the South China Sea. "We must insist on using battle-ready standards in undertaking combat preparations, constantly enhancing officers' and troops' thinking about serving in battle, and leading troops into battle and training troops for battle," Xi said, according to a report on Wednesday by Xi-

nhua, the state news agency, that was later published by prominent state-run newspapers. "And we must insist on rigorous military training based on the needs of actual combat." Speaking to soldiers in the city of Huizhou, Xi emphasized the military aspects of his Chinese dream: "This dream can be said to be the dream of a strong nation; and for the military, it is the dream of a strong military. We must achieve the great revival of the Chinese nation, and we must ensure there is unison between a prosperous country and a strong military. □



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Gary McKinnon, accused of hacking into U.S. military computers and facing extradition to the U.S. to stand trial, leaves the High Court in London.
 (AP Photo/Sang Tan)

UK officials say they won't charge hacker

LONDON (AP) — British authorities opted Friday not to charge a computer hacker who waged a decade-long struggle to avoid trial in the U.S. for breaking into military computers.

Gary McKinnon, who has been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, was accused of one of the largest-ever breaches of military networks, carried out soon after the Sept. 11 attacks. U.S. officials have said McKinnon's hacking shut down the U.S. Army district responsible for protecting Washington, and caused about \$900,000 worth of damage. British prosecutors had to decide whether McKinnon, 46, should be tried here over alleged breaches of U.S. military and NASA networks, after he successfully fought extradition to the U.S. But they said Friday the appropriate place for trial would have been the U.S., and they were rec-

ommending that police take no further action. That means no further charges will be leveled. "The potential difficulties in bringing a case in England and Wales now should not be underestimated, not least the passage of time, the logistics of transferring sensitive evidence prepared for a court in the U.S. to London for trial, the participation of U.S. government witnesses in the trial and the need fully to comply with the duties of disclosure," prosecutors said in a statement explaining their decision. The U.S. Justice Department said in a statement it has "always agreed with" the view of British prosecutors "that it is in the interests of justice for this case to be tried in the United States." McKinnon claims he was scouring sensitive U.S. computer networks in an attempt to uncover concealed evidence of extraterrestrial life. □

North Korea:

Launch shows Kim Jong Un as gambler

JEAN H. LEE

Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea

(AP) — A triumphant North Korea staged a mass rally Friday to glorify the country's young ruler, who took a big gamble this week in sending a satellite into orbit in defiance of international warnings.

Wednesday's rocket launch came just eight months after a similar attempt ended in an embarrassing public failure, and just under a year after Kim Jong Un inherited power following his father's death. The surprising success of the launch may have earned Kim global condemnation, but at home the gamble paid off, at least in the short term. To his people, it made the 20-something Kim appear powerful, capable and determined in the face of foreign adversaries.

Tens of thousands of North Koreans, packed into snowy Kim Il Sung Square, clenched their fists in a unified show of resolve as a military band tooted horns and pounded on drums. Huge red banners positioned in the square called on North Koreans to defend Kim Jong Un with their lives. They also paid homage to Kim Jong Un's father, Kim Jong Il, and his grandfather, North Korean founder Kim Il Sung.

Pyongyang says the rocket put a crop and weather monitoring satellite into orbit. Much of the rest of the world sees it as a thinly dis-

guised test of banned long-range missile technology. It could bring a fresh round of U.N. sanctions that would increase his country's international isolation. At the same time, the success of the launch could strengthen North Korea's military, the only entity that poses a potential threat to Kim's rule. The launch's success, 14 years after North Korea's first attempt, shows more than a little of the gambling spirit in the third Kim to rule North Korea since it

tional University in South Korea. The propaganda machinery churned into action early Friday, with state media detailing how Kim Jong Un issued the order to fire off the rocket just days after scientists fretted over technical issues, ignoring the chorus of warnings from Washington to Moscow against a move likely to invite more sanctions.

Top officials followed Kim in shrugging off international condemnation. Workers' Party Secretary Kim Ki Nam told the crowd, bundled up against a winter chill in the heart of the capital, that "hostile forces" had dubbed the launch a missile test. He rejected the claim and called on North Koreans to stand their ground against the "cunning" critics.

North Korea called the satellite a gift to Kim Jong Il, who is said to have set the lofty goal of getting a satellite into space and then tapped his son to see it into fruition. The satellite, which North Korean scientists say is designed to send back data about crops and weather, was named Kwangmyongsong, or "Lode Star" — the nickname legendarily given to the elder Kim at birth.

Kim Jong Il died on Dec. 17, 2011, so to North Koreans, the successful launch is a tribute. State TV have been replaying video of the launch to "Song of Gen. Kim Jong Il." But it is the son who will bask in the glory, and face the international censure that may follow. □



North Korean soldiers applaud near a sign which reads "The great Kim Jong Un" during a mass rally organized to celebrate the success of a rocket launch that sent a satellite into space on Kim Il Sung Square in Pyongyang, North Korea, Friday, Dec. 14, 2012.

(AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

became a country in 1948. "North Korean officials will long be touting Kim Jong Un as a gutsy leader" who commanded the rocket launch despite being new to the job and young, said Kim Byung-ro, a North Korea specialist at Seoul Na-

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Bill retaliating against US moves ahead in Russia

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian legislators have given initial approval to a bill that would impose sanctions on Americans accused of human rights violations. The measure, whose first reading in the lower house of parliament passed by a vote of 431-2, is a response to an American bill that President Barack Obama signed into law later Friday. The U.S. measure opens new export opportunities for Americans wanting to do business in Russia. But one section would punish Russian officials accused of human rights violations. The Russian bill does not specify what criteria would

be used to assess human rights violations, but Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich said targets could include people who abuse adopted Russian children and people responsible for the creation of secret prisons. Soon after Obama signed the U.S. bill into law, the ministry issued a withering statement calling it "odious" and "blatant interference in our internal affairs." Speaking to reporters in Washington, U.S. State Department spokesman Patrick Ventrell rejected Russia's attempt to turn the tables at the U.S. "I think it stretches the imag-



A portrait of lawyer Sergei Magnitsky who died in jail, is held by his mother Nataliya Magnitskaya, as she speaks during an interview with the AP in Moscow. (AP Photo)

ination to see an equal and reciprocal situation here,"

Ventrell said. "The issue of adoption is one that we've

worked very hard with the Russians. Something that we've looked at carefully, but we just reject any attempt at this trying to make a reciprocal comparison." The U.S. law is named after Sergei Magnitsky, a Russian lawyer who was arrested by police officials he accused of a \$230 million tax fraud. He was repeatedly denied medical treatment and in 2009 died in jail. Russian rights groups accused the Kremlin of failing to prosecute those responsible. Moreover, the officials that Magnitsky accused of fraud went on to be promoted. □

China, South Africa ban beef imports from Brazil

SAO PAULO (AP) — China and South Africa have banned imports of its beef because of fears of mad cow disease, Brazil's Agriculture Ministry said Friday. The ministry said in a statement that the two countries temporarily suspended their beef imports from the world's second largest exporter of the product. Japan did the same earlier this month. The ministry said earlier this week that the carcass of a cow that died two years ago in southern Brazil contained disease-carrying proteins, or prions, but the animal did not "manifest

the disease nor die of it". "This episode does not pose any risk to public health or animal sanitary safety, considering that the animal did not die of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (the scientific name of mad cow disease) and the fact that it was buried in the property itself," the ministry said in an earlier statement. Neither China, Japan nor South Africa are major importers of Brazilian beef. During the first 10 months of the year Brazil exported 11,700 tons of beef to the three countries, compared with total exports of 1 million tons during the same

period. Brazil has said it will send missions to the top 20 nations that buy its beef to explain the case. "The government will provide all the necessary clari-

fications to eliminate all doubts as to our animal sanitation defense system," Jose Carlos Vaz, the ministry's secretary general said this week. According to the ministry, the case was re-

ported to the Paris-based World Organization for Animal Health, which has maintained Brazil's "status as a country with insignificant risk" of mad cow disease. □

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'Chavismo' struggle brews in Venezuela

IAN JAMES

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)

— Hugo Chavez's most influential allies are projecting an image of unity while the president recovers from cancer surgery in Cuba, standing side-by-side and pledging to uphold his socialist movement no matter what happens.

But with Chavez's outlook increasingly darkening, some Venezuelans believe power struggles are brewing between ambitious lieutenants long in the president's shadow.

One-man rule has been the glue holding together Chavez's movement, and he hadn't groomed any clear successor until he surprised Venezuelans with the announcement last weekend that if cancer forced him from office he wanted his vice president, Nicolas Maduro, to take over. The president's diverse "Chavismo" movement includes groups from radical leftists to moderates, and long-hidden divisions could flare, at least behind-the-



Venezuela's Vice President Nicolas Maduro, center right, talks with members of Venezuela's Islamic community after their meeting in Caracas, Venezuela, Friday, Dec. 14, 2012.

(AP Photo/Fernando Llano)

scenes, if Chavez is no longer in charge.

"In politics, everything is possible," said Gustavo Chourio, a bookseller in downtown Caracas, adding that he expects conflict between Maduro and National Assembly President Diosdado Cabello.

Maduro leads a civilian-political wing that is considered to be closely aligned with Cuba's communist

government. Cabello, a former military officer, is thought to have strong ties to the military — a relationship he highlighted when he spoke at a Mass for Chavez held at Venezuela's largest military base.

Analysts agree that political battles are likely, if not inevitable. "It is almost certain that an intense power struggle is already under way within Chavismo," said Michael Shifter, president of the Inter-American Dialogue think tank in Washington.

Shifter said key figures in the president's camp, including Maduro and Cabello, have long had to suppress personal ambition as Chavez monopolized decision-making. "With Chavez no longer on the scene, and the power vacuum exposed, the situation becomes extremely unpredictable," Shifter said. "The fact that Maduro is Chavez's designated successor gives him the upper hand for the time being, but that is unlikely to last long. The others vying for power are wily and ruthless. From the outset, the Chavez regime has been about power — including lots of money — and now all of that is up for grabs."

Maduro and Cabello, for their part, showed a united front this week by appearing together at events along with other Cabinet ministers and military commanders. □

AROUND THE WORLD

China arrests legislator with 4 wives

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese authorities have arrested a legislator found to have four wives. A district official in the northern province of Shanxi said Li Junwen also had 10 children, and had been detained on suspicion of document forgery. Bigamy is a criminal offense in China, while rules restrict most couples to just one child. Another 14 people were sacked or given warnings or demotions for negligence or helping Li arrange identity documents for his illegitimate children, said the official reached by phone at the Xiaodian district party committee in the provincial capital of Taiyuan. The 43-year-old Li had been an appointed representative from Xiaodian and the Communist Party head of the village of Xiquan. □

7 sentenced in Mexico casino arson

MONTERREY, Mexico (AP) — A Mexican government official says seven men have been sentenced to long prison terms for their roles in a northern Mexico casino fire that killed 52 people last year. The official says a judge in Nuevo Leon state has sentenced six men to 75 years in prison and a seventh to 100 years. Seven others are awaiting trial. The official spoke Friday on condition of anonymity, citing concerns for his safety. Gunmen entered the Casino Royale in the city of Monterrey, spread gasoline and set the building on fire. Most of the victims were women playing bingo and slots or having lunch. Officials have said the owner received extortion threats from the Zetas cartel and didn't pay. □

Porn site owner extradited to Berlin

BERLIN (AP) — The owner of the heavily used YouPorn and Pornhub websites has been extradited to Germany after being arrested in Belgium on suspicion of tax evasion. Fabian Thylmann, a German who lives in Belgium, was extradited on Thursday. Alf Willwacher, a spokesman for Cologne prosecutors, said Friday that Thylmann didn't contest extradition. Thylmann was arrested last week on a German warrant, and several properties including his home were searched. Thylmann's company, Manwin, owns several sites including YouPorn and Pornhub which, according to Internet information company Alexa, are among the most popular websites on the planet. □

Sumatra elephant dead in Indonesia

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesian police say an endangered Sumatran elephant has been found dead at a rubber plantation, apparently poisoned by poachers. It is the 17th Sumatran elephant found dead on the island of Sumatra since March. First Lt. Simson Purba of the local police says the plantation owner found the male elephant dying in East Aceh district Friday. Purba says the animal was dead by the time authorities arrived. It was about 5 years old and its left tusk had been stolen. Police are investigating the death. Fewer than 3,000 Sumatran elephants are left in the wild. Environmentalists say they could be extinct within three decades unless they are protected. □

Lesbian denied custody gets apology

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — because she is gay. The Chile's government has apologized to a lesbian judge who was denied custody of her three daughters during a ceremony led by Justice Minister Teodoro Riberera. □

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entertainment for the night included Gaita Sparkle, DJ Beats, Robert Jean d'Or Y Su Solo Banda Show, and the popular Upgrade Music, which filled the dance floor with elegantly dressed couples and colleagues. The official part of the evening was emceed by Nelio Gomes Da Silva and General Air Service General Manager Dimitri Pavlowitch who joined Managing Director and CEO Alejandro Muyale to present top performers with handsomely engraved plaques, gifts, pats on the back and applause. Pavlowitch reports that the company's growth has been remarkable going from just 75 employees during the Millennium, to 278, in 2012.

PALM BEACH – Managing Director and CEO Alejandro Muyale, welcomed the employees of General Air Service to the grand ballroom of the Marriott Aruba Resort & Stellaris Casino, for the traditional yearend gala and award party. The resort's culinary team served a spectacular holiday buffet and the musical

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Spirit Airline, KLM, as well as all flights of Tui, ArcaFly, Thompson and Tomas Cook, besides handling DHL, Fed Ex & UPS.

General Air Services also takes care of all flights by its sister company Tiara Air, as well as many regional airliners from Brazil, Venezuela and Colombia, and char-

ter flights. Lead Agent Roxanne Rumnit and Customer Service Agent Rudolf van Tol, earned the Employee of the Year 2012, title for General Air Services in the Above the Wing category. Both were lauded for their excellent work ethic and skills, serving incoming and outgoing passengers at

Reina Beatrix Airport with infinite patience and professionalism.

Coordinator Malvin Tromp, and Agent Ruud Maduro won the Employee of the Year 2012 title at General Air Services in the Below the Wing category.

Both were recognized for their stellar attitude and conduct, servicing incoming and outgoing airplanes and handling luggage at Reina Beatrix Airport, with total dedication, focus and pride. Pictured here the Award Ceremony for General Air Services where certificates were handed to all nominees, and plaques to the winners.

General Air Services recently celebrated its 40th anniversary in Aruba. □



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“Pizza Bobs Restaurant & Pub” brings Chicago’s Pizza to Aruba

EAGLE BEACH - If you are looking for a simple but tasty option for your lunch or dinner or perhaps a small gathering with friends, “Pizza Bobs Restaurant & Pub”, located in front of Costa Linda is a nice and fun option.

At “Pizza Bobs Restaurant & Pub”, pizza is the star. You can always share the stardom with a nice cold beer

or an exotic cocktail, while enjoying their 2-for-1 Happy Hour from 5 till 7pm. Make sure to try “Bob’s Delicious Frozen Poison”, but only if you dare! The ingredients are top secret! To combine the “secret ingredients” try their Menu that has Starters, Salads, Sandwiches and Burgers, Entrees, even a Philly Cheese steak, and yes, of



course, Pizza! Pizza Bob has been in love with Pizza since his early days growing up on the south side of Chicago. He got his recipe from his friends and family that owns

Bill’s Pizza Pub, a famous pizza restaurant in Chicago open since 1957. Needless to say, they take a lot of pride in their Pizza. Each one is made to order, with fresh ingredients and low fat skim milk cheese imported from Wisconsin.

Whether you are in the mood for pizza, burgers, chicken and ribs or just to quench your thirst after a day at the beach with one of Bob’s specialty cocktails, make sure to stop by and visit us before leaving Aruba! ☐

Beauty On The Beach

Maiike Peek

She is from Holland and this is her first visit to Aruba! She is here for a two-week vacation with her boyfriend, and this was her first day on the beach! She is staying at the Arubiana Inn and enjoying Eagle Beach.



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Bugaloe will get you in the mood for a super-fun weekend!

PALM BEACH - Looking for a fun place to go? Looking for the best Mojito on the island? Just put on your "cruise control" and head to Bugaloe! Here you can enjoy our daily Happy Hour from 5 till 6pm, featuring special prices for selected Tropical Cocktails and our famous Mojito. When stopping at Bugaloe, make sure you try our signature cocktail, the "Frozen Bugaloe."

A delicious exotic mixture of Rum, Champagne, Peach Schnapps, Peach mix topped off with Sangria, this will surely get you in the mood for Karaoke Night, which is every Saturday from 8:30- 11:30pm,

hosted by the famous Giovanni Trim. If you have a bit of Latin Fever, but are not sure which way to move your feet, make sure to stop by for the "Free Salsa Lessons" on Wednesday from 8:30- 9:30 pm. If you don't get the steps, don't worry, you can come back next week and try again! Whether it's for the great food, exotic cocktails, lively entertainment, or just enjoying the beautiful Caribbean Sunset, stop by at Bugaloe located Palm Beach Open from 9:00am until 12:00pm. The kitchen is open from 10:00am until 10:00pm, so there is really no excuse not to have fun in Aruba! ☐



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Preferred RESIDENCES

Cas di Glas frenzy continues at CILO on Monday and Tuesday

ORANJESTAD - The setting will be different, but expectations are running high for the shows that musical star Jasper Taconis and opera singer Manuela van Geenhoove will be giving at CILO City Lounge this Monday and Tuesday evening. On the island for Cas di Glas, a fundraising happening at the Palm Beach Plaza Mall that is currently keeping the entire island in thrall, the two singers have made waves with their excellent performances. Manuela van Geenhooven is an accomplished singer, whose light repertoire keeps her audience more than a little entertained. Jasper Taconis is no newcomer to Aruba (and to CILO): he even has his personal fan club on the island! No wonder, this guy is absolutely great. He sings musical scores, but also popular songs and evergreens. His rendition of the opening song of Cas di



Glas 'This is the Moment' even drew some tears. Jasper Taconis is scheduled to sing at CILO City Lounge, the amazing marina-view restaurant on the

corner of the Renaissance Marketplace, on Monday, December 17. The lovely Manuela is performing on Tuesday, December 18. Showtime is 8 pm. Enjoy! □



American Style Burgers Rule!!

The inspiration for a good American style hamburger comes right from the owners backyard grill. Aaron Walisever – before his 'retirement' – was known as "The King of Fireplaces & Grills" in New England. Moving to Aruba from Sharon, Massachusetts with his wife Rosie was a positive move all around – but their search for a good burger and fries didn't stretch far from home. It was this reason that Rosie & Aaron opened 5 Burgers Aruba! As the name implies, there are 5 specialty burgers offered including a mammoth Western Burger, a tasty melted Gouda Burger, a Farmers Burger complete with a fried egg. For the very hungry, a 3 patty Man Burger and to round out the specials – a zesty chicken breast with special sauce is also available. Of course, hamburgers and cheeseburgers – small and regular sized are also on the menu. But the big surprise is the hand-cut daily – french fries – from select Idaho potatoes and hand-made onion rings! Cooking these in peanut oil leaves the pure potato flavor in the fry. A favorite way to enjoy fries is with vinegar! These complement any meal ordered at 5 Burgers! Burgers are pressed daily and are U.S.D.A. choice beef only and lightly seasoned with a special spice blend. They can even satisfy you if you desire a veggie burger. Toppings are encouraged and available at no additional charge – raw or grilled onions & mushrooms, lettuce, tomato, BBQ sauce and many more tasty items. Brand new items to the menu include a hand-made beef empanada and chicken bites. 5 Burgers Aruba is open from Noon to 10-ish daily. Delivery is available to your pool or hotel room! They are located behind Senor Frogs and across from the Radisson Hotel. Come by and enjoy a great burger experience. Rosie & Aaron are often on site – making sure that you are happy with your burger experience! Call 5 BURGERS ARUBA at 586-3904. □





BOUNCING BACK



Khan aiming for 'a good win' against Molina

British boxer Amir "King" Khan, left, and opponent Carlos Molina, right, pose Friday, Dec. 14, 2012 for a photo during the weigh-in ceremony for their super lightweight bout at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. The pair face off against each other on Saturday. Richard Schaefer, CEO of Golden Boy Promotions, center. Associated Press
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NFL Preview



New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady (12) reacts after running for yardage against the Houston Texans during the third quarter of an NFL football game in Foxborough, Mass., Monday, Dec. 10, 2012.

Associated Press

Week 15 has a playoff look and feel

BARRY WILNER

AP Pro Football Writer

Six days after thrashing the Houston Texans, the New England Patriots take on another likely division winner with Super Bowl aspirations when the San Francisco 49ers visit them on Sunday.

Should New England, the NFL's highest-scoring offense, do the same to the 49ers, who have allowed the second-fewest yards, then nobody will doubt the Patriots have earned the favorite's role.

Quarterback Tom Brady and the Patriots, winners of seven in a row, tend to live up to such challenges.

"Brady's going to make plays. His offense is going to make plays," 49ers cornerback Carlos Rogers said. "Our defense is going to make plays. We just want to make more than him at the end of the game."

But even with the No. 2 defense in the league, the 49ers are dealing with some special stuff as the Patriots take aim at several NFL offensive records.

Continued on page 21

2014 Tour de France to start in Leeds, England

JAMEY KEATEN
Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Drawn by cycling's runaway success in Britain, the Tour de France will cross the English Channel again in 2014 to start in the northern English city of Leeds and swing through London before returning to mainland Europe. Tour organizers announced Friday the second British debut in a decade for cycling's showpiece event, after the "Grand Depart" in London in 2007. The selection of the county of Yorkshire for the 2014 start also comes after Bradley Wiggins this year became the first Briton to win the Tour in its 109-year history. "We were very keen to return to the United Kingdom," Tour director Christian Prudhomme said in a statement. "Bradley Wiggins' historical victory last July and the enormous crowds that followed the

cycling events in the streets of London during the Olympic Games encouraged us to go back earlier than we had initially planned." Prudhomme suggested the Yorkshire terrain would likely favor sprinters and attackers. Tour organizers said preliminary details of the course route for the 2014 race will be presented at a Jan. 17 news conference. British cycling has been on a high in recent months, with strong showings for the national team on the track at the London Olympics and huge fan turnout along the roads for the time-trial and road race events. The Twitter feed of British Prime Minister David Cameron's office said it was "great to see more cycling success as Yorkshire & London to host 1st stages of 2014 (at)TourdeFrance." The president of British Cycling, Brian Cookson, said in a statement that he was



In this July 22, 2012 file photo, Bradley Wiggins, winner of the 2012 Tour de France cycling race, celebrates as he crosses the finish line of the last stage of the the Tour de France cycling race over 74.6 miles with start in Rambouillet and finish in Paris, France.

Associated Press

"thrilled the world's biggest bike race is coming back to this country." The announcement comes a day after Wiggins announced he wants to defend his Tour title — after previously indicating his focus in 2013 could be on the Giro d'Italia and the Span-

ish Vuelta.London Mayor Boris Johnson said he hopes the British capital will reap an economic windfall similar to the estimated 90 million pounds (\$145 million) generated by the race through London and the southeast in 2007. "This year we proved our

expertise not just in hosting world class sporting events, but in winning them too, and I am sure Bradley Wiggins and several of his compatriots will be hugely excited at the prospect of the Tour returning to their home streets," the mayor said in a statement.□

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Lochte sets world record at short-course worlds

ISTANBUL (AP) — Ryan Lochte broke his own world record in the 200-meter individual medley on Friday at the short-course world championships in Istanbul, and he celebrated by giving his medal to a boy in the crowd.

The Olympic star finished the eight laps in one minute and 49.63 seconds. Daiya Seto of Japan won silver in 1:52.80 and Laszlo Cseh of Hungary got the bronze in 1:52.80.

Lochte set his earlier record of 1:50.08 when the short-course championships were last held, in Dubai in 2010. The American won six gold medals and one silver, and has won four races so far in Istanbul. He took five medals at the London Olympics, including two golds.

"Any time you break the world record, it's amazing," Lochte said. "I swam my best time, of course. I wanted to do something that no one else did here. I didn't know I was going that fast anyway."

After the awards ceremony, Lochte gave his medal to a fan, nine-year-old Arda Cakmak, at the Sinan Erdem Arena. Cakmak was delighted, the medal ribbon around his neck as he showed off the medal to friends and photographers. "One of the main reasons for racing is because of my fans, so I always want to give something back," the swimmer said. "If I took the medal, it would end up in a sock drawer. If I give it to a fan, they're going to treasure it. It will make their day or even their life."

He said: "To see that smile on that little face means everything to me."

Lochte's victory on Friday was his fourth consecutive gold medal in the discipline, making him the second man to achieve that feat in short-course championships. James Hickman of Britain won the 200 butterfly five times between 1997 and 2004.

Daniel Gyurta of Hungary dominated the 200-meter



Ryan Lochte of the U.S. reacts after his victory with a new world record 1'49''63 in the men's 200 meters individual medley final during the FINA Short Course Swimming World Championships at the Sinan Erdem Arena in Istanbul, Turkey, Friday, Dec. 14, 2012.
Associated Press.

breaststroke in Istanbul, setting a competition record. Gyurta, who won gold in the event at the London Olympics, finished in two minutes and 1.35 seconds. Michael Jamieson of Britain, the Olympic silver medalist, again took silver, in a time of 2:03.00. Viatcheslav Sinkevich of Russia was third in 2:03.08. Akihiro Yamaguchi of Japan, the long-course world record holder, finished fourth.

"Based on the heats I decided to push from the beginning," Gyurta said. "'I wanted the race to be decided after the first 150 meters and I managed to do that, because the others could not take the pace.'" Gyurta set a long-course world record of 2:07.28 in the 200 breaststroke in London, but Yamaguchi erased it in 2:07.01 in September. Yamaguchi wasn't selected for the Olympics. In Istanbul, he was the fastest swimmer in the semifinals.

Paul Biedermann of Germany won a second gold medal for Germany in the 400 freestyle, overtaking

China's Yun Hao with 50 meters to go and winning in 3:39.15. Hao took silver in 3:39.48 and Mads Glaesner of Denmark got the bronze in 3:40.09.

Hao said the last turn didn't go well and that he didn't realize Biedermann was gaining on him in the last leg. "I was keeping an eye on the others, but when I touched the wall I thought I was first," Hao said. "I didn't see him coming."

In the women's 400 freestyle, Melanie Costa Schmid of Spain staged a similar acceleration in the final leg to get the gold in 4:01.08. Chloe Sutton of the United States won silver in 4:01.20 and Lauren Boyle of New Zealand, who had dominated the first 350 meters, came third in 4:01.24. World record-holder Camille Muffat of France did not participate.

Chinese women won gold and silver in the 50 butterfly when Ying Lu touched the wall first in 25.14 and Liuyang Jiao was next in 25.23. Denmark's Jeanette Ottesen took the bronze in 25.55. □



In this file photo taken Dec. 6, 2012, NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman, right, and deputy commissioner Bill Daly speak to reporters in New York.
Associated Press

NHL files suit, labor charge against union

IRA PODELL

AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Anticipating a possible antitrust suit, the NHL is bringing its labor fight against players to federal court.

The league announced Friday that it has filed a class action suit in the U.S. District Court in New York, seeking to establish that its now 90-day lockout is legal.

In a separate move, the NHL filed an unfair labor practice charge with the National Labor Relations Board, claiming the players' association has bargained in bad faith.

The NHL said it believes the union's executive board is seeking authorization to give up its collective bargaining rights, a necessary step before players could file an antitrust lawsuit.

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly declined to comment on the league's actions Friday. The moves were made after the sides held a bargaining teleconference, following two days of talks that included federal mediators.

Players' association special counsel Steve Fehr, meanwhile, declined to comment on the lawsuits or to confirm the union's plans regarding a so-called disclaimer of interest. But the union issued a statement Friday night to address the NHL's actions.

"The NHLPA has just received a copy of the National Labor Relations Board charge and has not yet been served with the lawsuit," the statement said. "However, based on what we've learned so far, the NHL appears to be arguing that players should be stopped from even considering their right to decide whether or not to be represented by a union. We believe that their position is completely without merit."

Fehr, who took part in the conference call earlier Friday, said the league didn't make its legal plans known during its discussions.

If players choose to pursue a disclaimer of interest, the union would essentially stop being a collective group to negotiate a labor deal with the NHL. The Canadian Press, citing unidentified sources, said that the union's executive board requested a vote from its membership on Thursday night that would give it the authority to file a disclaimer. Such a move wouldn't necessarily doom the entire hockey season that has already been long-delayed and shortened.

During the NBA lockout last year, the basketball union made a similar move. But negotiations continued anyway and a tentative agreement was reached within a couple of weeks.

The union then reformed in time for players to ratify the new deal and begin a shortened season. NFL players took the same route last year, as well. □

NBA Roundup

Anthony scores 30, Knicks beat slumping Lakers

The Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Carmelo Anthony scored 22 of his 30 points in the first quarter, and the New York Knicks held on after he departed with a sprained left ankle to beat the Los Angeles Lakers 116-107 on Thursday night in coach Mike D'Antoni's return to Madison Square Garden.

Firing in 3-pointers and moving the ball to open shooters, things they often struggled to do under D'Antoni, the Knicks won for the eighth time in nine games and improved to 9-0 at home for the first time since the 1992-93 season.

Meanwhile, things are starting as poorly for D'Antoni in Los Angeles as they ended in New York. The Lakers, still without Steve Nash and Pau Gasol, were never really in the game while losing their fourth straight and



New York Knicks forward Carmelo Anthony (7) protects the ball as he drives past Los Angeles Lakers forward Devin Ebanks (3) in the first half of their NBA basketball game at Madison Square Garden in New York, Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012. Associated Press

falling to 9-14.

Raymond Felton scored 19 points, and Tyson Chandler and J.R. Smith added 18

apiece for the Knicks.

Kobe Bryant had 31 points and 10 rebounds for the Lakers. Metta World Peace

finished with 23 points and Dwight Howard had 20.

HAWKS 113, BOBCATS 90 ATLANTA (AP) — Devin Harris scored 20 points, Josh Smith added 18 and the surging Atlanta Hawks handed Charlotte its 10th straight defeat.

The Hawks are 12-3 since losing three of their first five games this season. Atlanta has won two straight and five of six.

Gerald Henderson had 17 points and Ramon Sessions 16 for the Bobcats.

Lou Williams had eight of his nine assists in the first half for Atlanta. Williams, who finished with 13 points, matched his career high in assists, and Ivan Johnson added a season-high 16 points.

TRAIL BLAZERS 98, SPURS 90 PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Rookie guard Damian Lillard had a career-high 29 points and Portland hand-

ed San Antonio its second consecutive loss.

The Spurs, who have dropped only six games this season, trailed by as many as 12 in the second half but Manu Ginobili's layup cut the deficit to 89-85. J.J. Hickson answered for the Blazers with a running hook that made it 91-85 with 2:36 left.

Danny Green hit a 3-point-er to pull the Spurs closer again, but Portland clung to the lead and Nicolas Batum — who has been bothered by a sore back — made a 3 that gave Portland a 96-90 advantage with 1:08 left. Batum hit two free throws with 8 seconds to go for the final margin.

It was Lillard's 13th game this season with 20 or more points. LaMarcus Aldridge added 22 points for the Blazers and Hickson finished with 12 points and 12 rebounds. □

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Bengals beat Eagles 34-13

ROB MAADDI

AP Pro Football Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Cin-

cinnati quarterback Andy Dalton threw a touchdown pass and ran for another score, while an opportunistic defense forced five turnovers as the Bengals beat the Philadelphia Eagles 34-13 in the NFL on Thursday.

The Bengals ((8-6) moved half a game ahead of the Pittsburgh Steelers (7-6) for the last playoff spot in the AFC, with the two teams to meet in Pittsburgh next week.

The Bengals would clinch their second straight playoff berth with a win over the Steelers if Pittsburgh loses to Dallas this Sunday. A loss to

the Steelers, though, likely would ruin Cincinnati's chances.

The Eagles' season was lost a long time ago. They fell to 4-10, and there were plenty of empty seats at stadium amid fan pressure for the removal of Andy Reid as coach. Reid led the Eagles to nine playoff appearances, six division titles and five NFC championship games in his first 13 years. But the Eagles will miss the playoffs for the second straight year and owner Jeffrey Lurie already said 8-8 would be "unacceptable."

Philadelphia led 13-10 at halftime, but an interception by Leon Hall set up Dalton's go-ahead 11-yard TD

run in the third quarter. Then Wallace Gilberry picked up Bryce Brown's fumble and ran it back 25 yards for another score and an 11-point Cincinnati lead.

Dalton then tossed a 5-yard TD pass to A.J. Green in the fourth to cap a 24-point outburst in a span of 3:23. Bengals running back BenJarvus Green-Ellis ran for 106 yards, including a 1-yard TD run in the first quarter.

Eagles rookie Nick Foles made his fifth straight start in place of No.1 quarterback Michael Vick, who just returned to practice this week after sustaining a concussion on Nov. 11. Foles threw for 182 yards, one TD and one interception. □



Cincinnati Bengals' BenJarvus Green-Ellis, left, scores a touchdown as Philadelphia Eagles' DeMeco Ryans defends in the first half of an NFL football game, Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012, in Philadelphia.

Associated Press

NFL Preview

Continued from page 17

Niners coach Jim Harbaugh said of the Patriots: "Multiple strengths: A really good scheme, really good play calling and then great individual effort at each position, the great ability they have to play as a team. You could talk for hours about how good they are." The game is just one of many in a week that might be even better than the playoffs, with so many matchups between contenders.

AFC West champion Denver is at AFC North leader Baltimore, NFC South champion Atlanta meet the NFC East-leading New York Giants, NFC North leader Green Bay is at Chicago, Indianapolis at AFC South leader Houston, Pittsburgh at Dallas, and Minnesota at St. Louis.

The Denver Broncos have won eight straight as their defense has become staunch. That gives them an

edge in that area over the sputtering Ravens, which says a lot in itself considering how good Baltimore's defense usually is. Then there's the comfort level Peyton Manning has gained with his Broncos playmates on offense. In contrast, the Ravens fired offensive coordinator Cam Cameron this week, replacing him with Jim Caldwell — coincidentally, Manning's last coach in Indianapolis before the four-time MVP headed to Denver. "I really felt he took my game to another level," Manning said. "He's also been a tremendous friend to me and mentor. I miss being around him every day and I miss his friendship every day. That's how I feel about Jim."

Although Atlanta has the best record in the NFC, it's looked vulnerable for more than a month. One of two undefeated teams at home — Seattle is the other — Atlanta needs to re-establish some momentum after a weak performance

in a loss at Carolina. What better way than against the Super Bowl champions?

"When you set out at the beginning of the year, you want to win every game that you play," Falcons quarterback Matt Ryan

said. "You can't worry about what everybody else is doing and what that means in terms of your playoff picture. I think we just played poorly last week and that's something we can't do again this week." The Giants also have been

up and down and have only a one-game lead in the NFC East, where Dallas and Washington have better divisional records. Elsewhere on Sunday, it's Seattle against Buffalo in Toronto; Washington at Cleveland. □



San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick, right, celebrates with tight end Delanie Walker, left, after Kaepernick scored a touchdown on a 50-yard run during the fourth quarter of an NFL football game in San Francisco, Sunday, Dec. 9, 2012. San Francisco won the game 27-13.

Associated Press

Khan taking smarter approach to return vs. Molina

GREG BEACHAM

AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Amir Khan now realizes he was too exciting for his own good.

A boxer can only survive so many heedless brawls before his record and his health begin that inexorable decline toward retirement. Khan (26-3, 18 KOs) felt himself teetering on that downslope last July when the British 140-pound champion lost his belts to Danny Garcia in a dramatic stoppage.

"It's in my blood," Khan said. "I want to have wars. I want to be in exciting fights. But why do I have to do that?"

Khan asked that question constantly for the past few months while rebuilding himself into something better. With a newfound dedication to intelligent boxing and a new trainer in his corner, Khan begins his climb back to the top on Saturday against Carlos Molina (17-0-1, 7 KOs).

Khan's loss to Garcia was the type of defeat that causes soul-searching, particularly on the heels of a decision loss to Lamont Peterson late last year. After examining the effects of fame and machismo on his style, he placed blame on himself for giving in to the primal urges in anybody



British boxer Amir "King" Khan, left, and opponent Carlos Molina, right, pose for a photo during the weigh-in ceremony Friday, Dec. 14, 2012 for their super lightweight bout at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum.

Associated Press

who takes up boxing for a living.

"I was getting bored in there," Khan said of his loss to Garcia. "I was beating him so easily, and I started to want to put on a show and take chances. That's when I got caught. If I had stuck to the type of fight that I should have, I would have beaten him. ... I see myself as the underdog now, in a way, after my last fight. This is the hardest I've ever trained, and I'm in top form."

Khan's fight against Molina,

a rising local prospect, is the grand finale of a marathon show at the venerable Los Angeles Sports Arena downtown. Leo Santa Cruz will defend his IBF bantamweight title against unbeaten Alberto Guevara, and U.S. Olympian Joseph Diaz Jr. will make his pro debut along with a handful of fellow Olympic boxers.

The evening show features exciting 154-pounder Alfredo Angulo's next comeback fight against Jorge Silva, along with unbeaten heavyweight Deontay

Wilder's attempt at his 26th consecutive knockout victory against Kelvin Price.

Khan concludes the event with his attempt to put his career back on an upward trajectory. The biggest move in Khan's self-evaluation over the past few months was a change in trainers, dumping Freddie Roach for Virgil Hunter.

"I wouldn't say he's changed his style, but I would say he's changed his mindset," said Hunter, the mastermind behind Andre Ward's rise up the pound-

for-pound rankings. "He just had to understand who he was, and how to get the most out of that. He knows how to fight, but he was never taught how to box."

That's just one of several swipes directed at Roach by Khan's camp in recent months. Khan's camp decided he needed more full-time attention than Roach could give him — and Khan stoked a little acrimony by saying Roach had slowed down due to his Parkinson's disease, an opinion hotly disputed by Roach and Manny Pacquiao.

But Khan and Hunter appear to mesh particularly well. Although Khan still lives a big lifestyle after nearly a decade of enormous fame in Britain, complete with an exorbitant entourage of hangers-on and sycophants, he willingly moved to San Francisco to train with the East Bay-based Hunter.

"He's very coachable," Hunter said. "If you tell him something, he believes in you, and he does it. I've always believed if a fighter is confident, he's going to be coachable, and that's been the case with him."

Khan insists he's still an exciting fighter, and he's confident in his chances of finishing Molina, a 26-year-old with no topflight opponents on his resume. □



In this July 30, 2012, file photo, New York Yankees' Ichiro Suzuki hits a solo home run during the seventh inning of a baseball game against the Baltimore Orioles at Yankee Stadium in New York. Suzuki and the Yankees are closing in on a contract that would guarantee the outfielder between \$12 million and \$13 million.

Associated Press

MLB Roundup

Japan's Lions ink former MLB outfielder Spilborghs: TOKYO (AP) — Former Colorado Rockies outfielder Ryan Spilborghs signed a one-year deal worth \$700,000 with the Seibu Lions of Japan's Pacific League on Friday.

The 33-year-old, right-handed hitter has played all three outfield positions. "It's been a dream of mine to play in Japan," Spilborghs said in a statement. "I'm honored to be a member of the Lions and will work hard to help the team win."

Spilborghs spent seven years in the major leagues, all with the Rockies. He had a .272 batting average with 42 home runs and 218 RBIs in 619 games. The Lions also signed former MLB pitcher Dennis Sarfate, who spent the last two seasons in Japan with the Hiroshima Carp. The 31-year-old Sarfate saved 35 games for the Carp in 2011 but had only nine in 2012. Former MLB pitcher Daniel

Cabrera signs with Chunichi: NAGOYA, Japan (AP) — The Chunichi Dragons of Japan's Central League have signed former major league pitcher Daniel Cabrera.

The Dragons said Friday they have signed the 31-year-old right-hander from the Dominican Republic to a one-year deal worth \$450,000 plus performance bonuses.

Cabrera has a 48-65 record with a 5.10 ERA over six seasons in the major leagues with the Baltimore Orioles, Washington Nationals and Arizona Diamondbacks.

Cabrera spent all of 2011 recovering from Tommy John surgery. This year he made 24 starts in the minor-league affiliates of the Pittsburgh Pirates and Diamondbacks, going 7-8 with a 4.23 ERA over 132 innings. Appeals court to hear Bonds' appeal on Feb. 13:

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A federal appeals court will hear former San Fran-

cisco slugger Barry Bonds' appeal of his obstruction of justice conviction early next year.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on Thursday scheduled oral arguments for Feb. 13 before a three-judge panel in San Francisco.

The career home run leader was convicted in April 2011 of giving an evasive, rambling reply during a 2003 grand jury appearance when asked whether he received drugs that required a syringe.

The jury deadlocked on three charges he made false statements, and prosecutors dropped those counts in August 2011.

U.S. District Judge Susan Illston sentenced Bonds to 30 days house arrest, two years of probation, 250 hours of community service in youth-related activities and a \$4,000 fine. She delayed imposing the sentence pending the appeal. □

Smartphones can soon be used to 'e-hail' NYC taxis

VERENA DOBNIK

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Raising your arm and yelling "taxi!" is the old-fashioned way to nab a New York City cab. Soon, all you'll need is a smartphone app.

New York City's Taxi and Limousine Commission on Thursday approved a pilot program allowing riders to "e-hail" yellow cabs, starting Feb. 15 on a test basis. Until now, the city has banned yellow taxis from prearranging rides.

"We should not ignore technology that's out there.

This is not speculative, this is real," Commissioner David Yassky said.

The commission issued a news release after the vote celebrating what it called "appy days ahead."

The system will be tried out for one year.

After the free apps start linking customers with drivers in mid-February, the commission will produce quarterly reports on the program's success, leading to a decision on whether to extend it.

At least a dozen companies are ready to provide the service, including ones now operating in other U.S. cities and overseas. London has a thriving taxi e-hail system.

A group of cabbies attended the commission hearing.

One later addressed the issue of customers who still want to hail a cab the traditional way — by standing in the street and waving — and who might worry that cabbies will pass them by.

"If I accept an e-hail, I won't stop for a person on the street," acknowledged driver Mohammad Butt, 35, a Staten Island resident. "But if I have a passenger in the car now, I don't stop, either."

On the other hand, driver Antonio Clark said the smartphone hail will make getting a cab easier at night in neighborhoods where they're not easily

available.

"You don't have to stand on a dark, empty street," said Clark, 30, of Brooklyn. "You can wait inside an entrance, because the driver has your address."

Jerry Corraya, 23, is a fan of the new service because he lives in Queens, "where it's hard to get a cab."

Besides, "the world is moving fast, and we have to go with it," said Corraya, who works at a pastry stand in Penn Station.

Commission research showed drivers still prefer to pick up gesturing passengers, Yassky said.

"They'll still tend to pick up a ride that's there first," he said.

"I think drivers will use the app when there's no passenger out there."

Here's how it works. A potential fare uses the app to request a ride.

That request goes out to all participating cabbies within a certain distance, and the cabbie who uses his or her own cellphone to respond first will get the fare. City law prohibits drivers from talking on handheld cellphones, but they will be able to use them to respond to an e-hail.

The electronic system is optional for cab companies. Mensah Kwabenah, a cabbie waiting for customers near Penn Station, said he'll respond to app hails if his cab owner wants him to.

The 56-year-old driver said that personally, he felt checking his phone for a customer's location "is going to be a distraction, and it could cause accidents" — even if the cell phone is mounted.

The commission was subject to lobbying from the service car industry, which fears loss of business if yellow cabs are allowed to prearrange rides.

The commissioner said the city will make sure both drivers and customers are protected.

The driver should be able to accept a ride with a single touch after receiving

a passenger signal, Yassky said.

Distance limits will be built into the technology. For example, from 59th Street to Battery Park in Manhattan — the primary business zone — yellow cabs will be allowed to respond to an electronic hail within a half-mile (800 meters).

Elsewhere in the city, the limit is a mile and a half (2.4 kilometers).

Customers may pay by using apps that interact with the technology being used in a particular yellow cab, according to TLC spokesman Allan Fromberg. □



In this Aug. 4, 2011 file photo, a couple carrying shopping bags hails a taxi in New York City. On Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012, New York City's Taxi & Limousine Commission approved a plan that will allow riders to "e-hail" yellow cabs using their smart phones.

Associated Press

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STREET BRIEFS

GE dividend up, buyback is extended

NEW YORK (AP) — Industrial conglomerate General Electric is raising its quarterly dividend by 12 percent while extending and expanding its share repurchase plan. The new quarterly dividend is 19 cents, up from 17 cents. The dividend will be paid on Jan. 25 to shareholders as of Dec. 24. The board of Fairfield, Connecticut-based General Electric Co. is also extending GE's stock buyback plan through 2015. It's authorizing up to \$10 billion for additional shares. The plan had \$4.9 billion available for repurchase at the end of the third quarter. GE manufactures products such as jet engines and refrigerators and provides equipment and services to a growing roster of energy companies. GE shares rose 2 cents to \$21.64 in morning trading. □

Fiat denies reports of capital talks

MILAN (AP) — Fiat has denied reports that it is talks with banks to raise capital to boost its ownership of U.S. automaker Chrysler LLC. Fiat said in a statement Friday that "there is no specific project" and that it "believes there is no need for a capital increase." Fiat and Chrysler CEO Sergio Marchionne conceded in October that investment plans for Italy deprive Fiat of the cash to buy the remaining stake in the U.S. automaker from the autoworkers' pension health trust. Fiat has a 58.5 percent stake in Chrysler and has always planned to buy out the minority shareholder. Fiat shares were down 2.27 percent to €3.61 (\$4.72) after it posted a 13 percent drop in year-on-year registrations in November. The European market dropped 7 percent by comparison. □

Stocks edge lower; Apple sinks 4 percent

MATTHEW CRAFT
AP Business Writer
NEW YORK (AP) — Apple,

the most valuable company in the U.S., slumped Friday, helping to drag down the stock market. A lack of progress in federal budget talks also discouraged investors.

Apple's stock dropped 4 percent after the launch of the iPhone 5 in Beijing failed to draw the long lines of customers that showed up for previous versions, according to news reports. Analysts at UBS cut their earnings estimates and price target for Apple, which lost \$19.90 to close at \$509.79.

The Standard & Poor's 500 index fell 5.87 points to close at 1,413.58, while the tech-heavy Nasdaq composite sank 20.83 points to 2,971.33. Apple is the biggest stock in both indexes. The Dow, which doesn't include Apple, fell 35.71 points, or 0.3 percent, to 13,135.01. All three stock-market measures ended the week with a loss.

President Barack Obama and House Speaker John

Boehner met Thursday to discuss a budget deal to avoid the "fiscal cliff," a collection of higher taxes and government spending cuts scheduled to start Jan. 1. There were no signs of progress, however, and Boehner returned home to Ohio on Friday.



Trader John Bishop, right, works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, Friday, Dec. 14, 2012, in New York. Stocks closed mostly down on Wall Street after a drop in U.S. consumer prices and a strong survey of Chinese manufacturing failed to excite investors.
(AP Photo/Richard Drew)

day. Investors remain confident the two sides will reach a deal soon, said Todd Morgan, a founder of Bel Air Investment Advisors in Los Angeles. But the more time

it takes, the more anxious they get. "People want to move ahead and get past this," Morgan said. "The uncertainty around it is what's making people nervous." The Labor Department said a steep fall in gas prices pushed

percent, the biggest drop in nearly four years. Consumer prices have risen 1.8 percent over the past year. The report helped nudge up prices for U.S. government debt, pushing yields down. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note slipped to 1.70 percent from 1.73 percent late Thursday. When inflation is weak, it suggests that interest rates are unlikely to jump, and bond prices unlikely to drop, anytime soon.

Asian markets rose after HSBC said manufacturing in China is picking up. Its index for manufacturing December rose to 50.9, a slight increase from the previous month. Anything above 50 is a sign of growth.

Among other companies in the news: — Adobe jumped 6 percent after the maker of Photoshop editing software and other applications reported results that beat analysts' expectations. More subscribers for its online Creative Cloud service helped drive revenue and earnings higher. Adobe's stock gained \$2.03 to \$37.56. □

US manufacturing output rises in November

MARTIN CRUTSINGER
AP Economics Writer
WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S.

factories rebounded in November from Superstorm Sandy, boosting production of cars, equipment and appliances. But after factoring out the impact from the storm, the broader trend in manufacturing remained weak.

The Federal Reserve said Friday that factory output increased 1.1 percent in November from October. That offset a 1 percent decline in the previous, which was blamed on the storm. Auto production jumped 4.5 percent last month, the first increase since July. Production of primary metals, wood products, electrical equipment and appliances all showed gains.

Total industrial output at factories, mines and utilities rose also rose 1.1 percent last month, after a 0.7 percent decline in October.

Still, economists cautioned that the rebound in manufacturing was almost entirely related to Sandy.

Sal Guatieri, senior economist at BMO Capital Mar-

ket, noted that when averaging data over October and November, industrial output and manufacturing both were up just 2.1

percent over the past year — less than half the growth rate from the start of the year. "Looking beyond Sandy's impact, U.S. manufacturers continue



Sherle Mir works on an assembly line at Generac Power Systems, Inc., one of the largest makers of residential generators in the country, in Whitewater, Wis.
(AP Photo/Nam Y. Huh)

to plod ahead," Guatieri said. Many companies have delayed purchases of machinery and equipment this year because

of uncertainty surrounding taxes and government spending. They are also worried about a slowdown in global growth that has weighed on U.S. exports. "The global slowdown will prevent a strong recovery" in manufacturing, predicted Paul Dales, senior economist at Capital Economics. U.S. manufacturing activity shrank in November to the slowest pace since July 2009, according to a closely watched index of manufacturing activity compiled by the Institute for Supply Management. China's manufacturing activity rose to a 14-month high in December, adding to signs the world's second-largest economy is recovering, a survey showed Friday. But export orders weakened. Economists say the U.S. economy is growing in the current October-December quarter at an annual rate below 2 percent. □



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Could a budget fight rattle the bond market?

MATTHEW CRAFT
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — On the road and in financial markets, it pays to ask somebody with a good sense of direction.

Two years ago, most of Wall Street's economists believed interest rates had bottomed out. But not Priya Misra, a top investment strategist at Bank of America Merrill Lynch. She was one of few to argue that the sputtering U.S. economy and the European debt crisis would knock long-term interest rates to record lows in 2011.

"I was called quite crazy at that point," she says. Her forecast looks clear-sighted today: The rate on the 10-year Treasury note, an all-important anchor for mortgage rates and other loans, seems stuck under a historically low 2 percent. So what does Misra think now?

Long-term interest rates

will creep higher, she says, as the economy gradually gains strength. The wild card is Washington, where talks are under way to avert tax increases and government spending cuts scheduled to start in January.

Most on Wall Street are confident that congressional Republicans and the White House will stave off the full "fiscal cliff" because the stakes are so high. Economists say the tax hikes and spending cuts could trigger a recession early next year. "Our assumption is that a deal will get done," Misra says. If the two sides fail to strike a bargain, "politicians know that the markets will take it very badly and blame Washington for it." That confidence may take a hit, pushing Treasury yields lower, if the talks drag on too long. Ethan Harris, Bank of America's chief U.S. economist, says it looks increasingly likely that

budget negotiations will run into the new year.

If that happens, it may take the financial markets to force Congress to compromise.

"Congress and the president have given themselves way too much to do in way too little time,"



Two years ago, most of Wall Street's economists believed interest rates had bottomed out. But not Priya Misra (featured), a top investment strategist at Bank of America Merrill Lynch.

(Handout Photo)

Harris says. "Something has to slap Washington in the face, and it'll be the stock market."

Why not the bond mar-

ket? A fight over a government's budgets and debt might be expected to send investors fleeing from its bonds, causing prices to fall and yields, which reflect the government's borrowing rate, to climb.

Battles over budgets in Spain and Italy, for in-

the opposite effect.

That's because rates are also a barometer of worry. When the world economy appears in danger, banks and big investors hide money in Treasuries, ignoring mounting government debt because they see the U.S., the world's largest economy, as a trustworthy borrower.

In July, fear that Europe's debt troubles could set off a global financial crisis drove the 10-year Treasury rate to a record low, 1.38 percent. Since then, the European Central Bank has taken steps to calm the crisis, and the 10-year Treasury rate has climbed. It was 1.70 percent on Friday. Today, the economy is healthier than it was two years ago, when Misra made her prescient prediction about record-low interest rates.

But a hard enough blow could still send it into a recession. □

Cheaper gas lowers US consumer prices 0.3%

C. S. RUGABER
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A steep fall in gas costs pushed down a measure of U.S. consumer prices last month, keeping inflation mild.

The seasonally adjusted consumer price index dropped 0.3 percent in November from October, the Labor Department said Friday. Gas prices fell 7.4 percent, the biggest drop in nearly four years. That offset a 0.2 percent rise in food prices.

In the past year, consumer prices have risen 1.8 percent, down from October's 12-month increase of 2.2 percent.

Excluding the volatile food

and gas categories, prices ticked up 0.1 percent in November. Core prices have risen 1.9 percent in the past year — below the Federal Reserve's annual target of 2 percent.

Higher rents, airline fares and new cars pushed up core prices last month. The cost of clothing and used cars fell.

"In simplest terms, inflation is not a problem," Jim Baird, chief investment strategist at Plante Moran Financial Advisors, said. Lower inflation "is a real positive that should provide modest relief for households dealing with limited income growth."

High unemployment and slow wage growth have

made businesses reluctant to raise prices. Many worry higher prices could drive away customers. That's helped keep inflation tame. Modest inflation leaves consumers with more money to spend, which can boost economic growth. Lower inflation also makes it easier for the Fed to continue with its efforts to rekin-

dle the economy.

If the Fed were worried that prices are rising too fast, it might have to raise interest rates.

Gasoline prices have fallen sharply in the past two months after spiking in the late summer. A gallon of gas cost an average of \$3.29 (86 cents a liter) nationwide Friday. □

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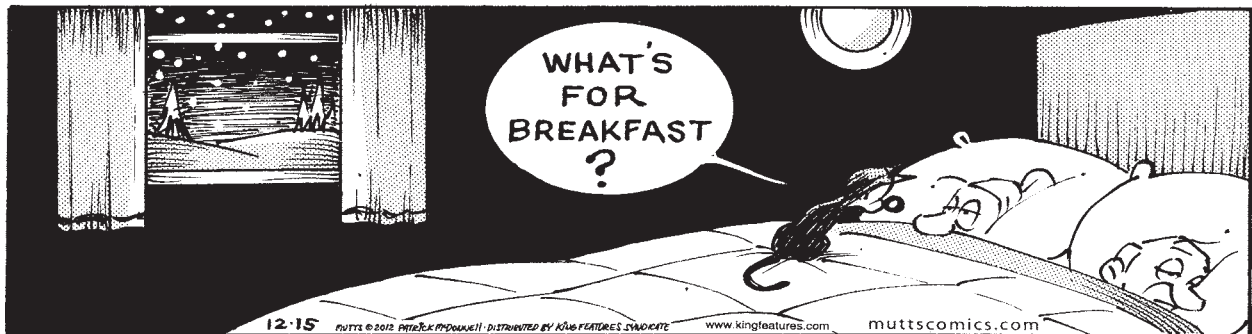
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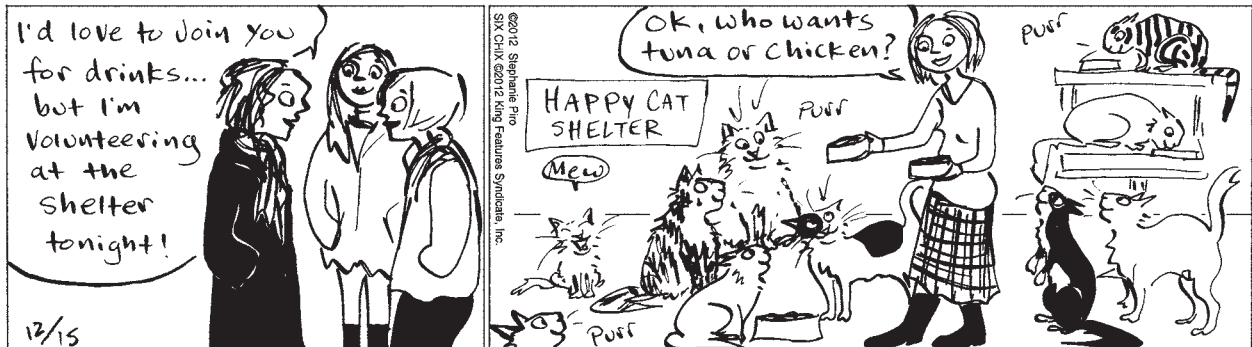
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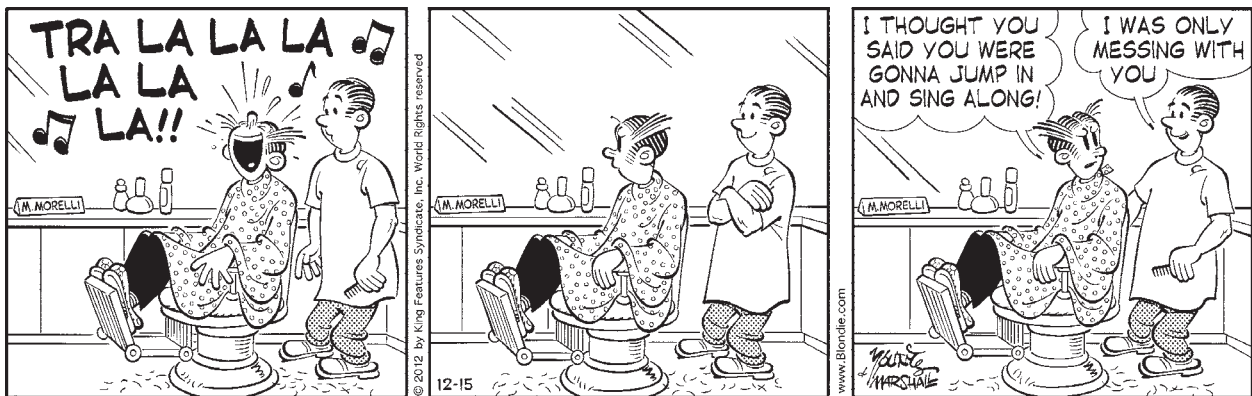
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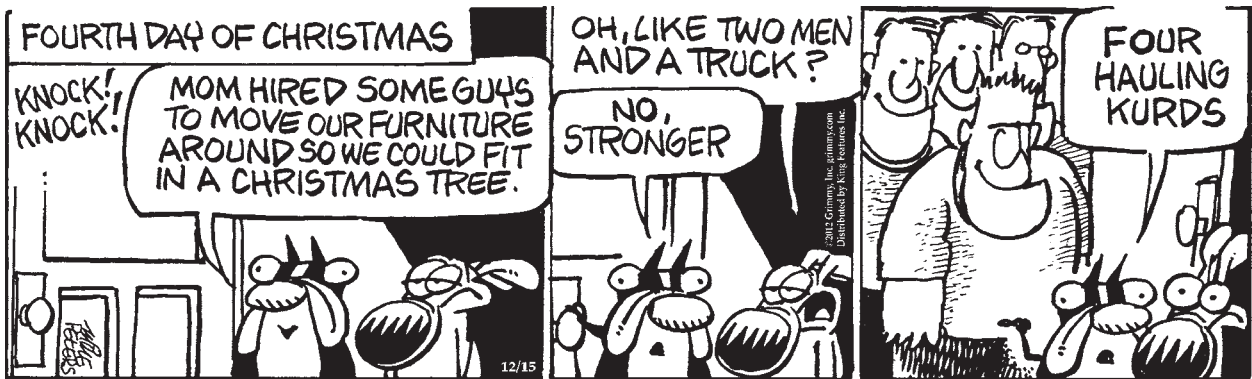
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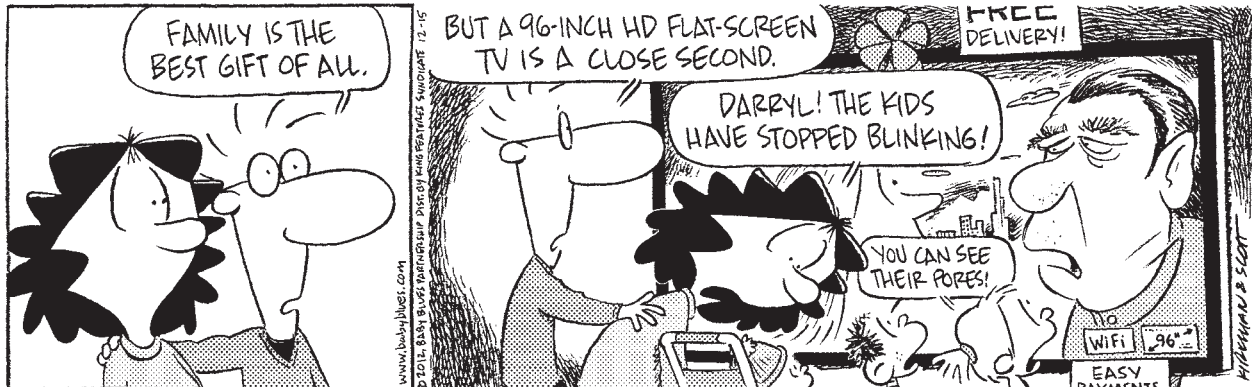
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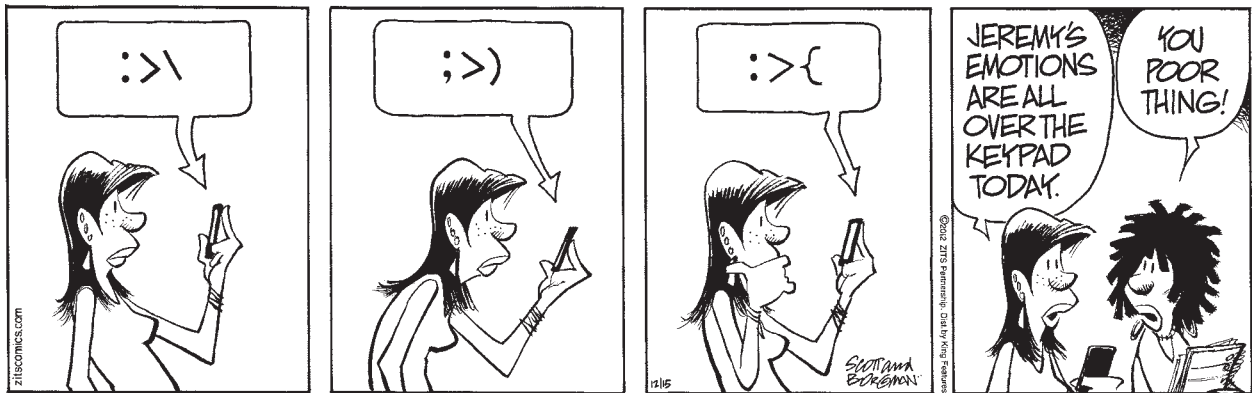
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Conceptis Sudoku

	5			8				
			3	7	5			9
		3				6		
	3			1			8	
6	4						2	7
	2			9			3	
		5				7		
9			4	2	7			
				6			4	

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

12/15

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

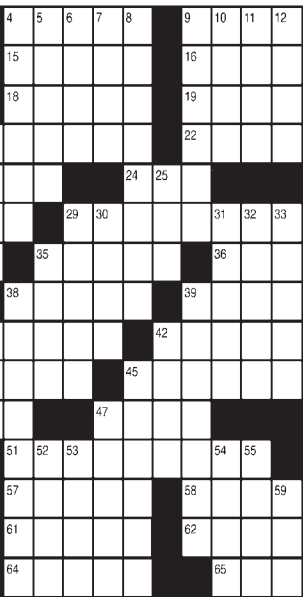
6	1	2	8	3	4	7	5	9
7	3	4	6	5	9	2	1	8
8	5	9	1	2	7	4	3	6
3	9	8	2	6	1	5	4	7
5	2	7	9	4	8	3	6	1
4	6	1	5	7	3	9	8	2
2	7	6	3	8	5	1	9	4
1	4	3	7	9	6	8	2	5
9	8	5	4	1	2	6	7	3

ACROSS

- Canister
- Hindu teacher
- Actor Everett
- Computer screen image
- Navajo dwelling
- "There's no place like _"
- Barry or Wilder
- "Goodnight, _", folk song
- Come _; find
- Down in the dumps
- Robin's home
- Story
- Sort; type
- Ridiculous
- PAC member
- Exact duplicate
- Buckets
- Body of water
- In this place
- Ethiopia's _ Selassie
- Bowwow
- Corncob
- _ S. Truman
- Use a loom
- Commandeers a plane in flight
- Zodiac sign
- Ring king, once
- Suffer defeat
- Singer Clapton
- In another place
- Pitcher's error
- Wanderer
- Arrived
- Two-wheeler
- Throw water on
- Church song
- Bench board
- Wrath
- Unhappy

DOWN

- Large
- Applied frosting
- Nary a one
- Protective plate for a knight
- Sicker
- Middle _; about A.D. 500 to about 1500
- Lions' dens
- Greasy
- Newton or Hayes
- Wait on at table
- Snatches
- Yosemite National _
- Large Spanish plantation



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

12/15/12

Friday's Puzzle Solved

OPERA	STAR	SCAM
LOVED	URGE	PALE
DREAD	NOON	OMIT
SERGEANT	APIECE	
ANDY	SMALLER	
RWANDA	SCENE	
IAN	AMBER	ERECT
ODOR	SAVED	SALE
TENET	SEWED	RUE
CABIN	MESSES	
IMPERIL	BOLT	
ROOSTS	MANIACAL	
AUKS	EPIC	GLADE
TREE	COCK	HERDS
ENDS	TIES	TRESS

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- Implore
- Actor Holbrook
- "When You _ Upon a Star"
- Parka, for one
- Cosmetic case item
- Rent long-term
- Diminishes
- Metal bar
- Actress Chase
- Nutcase
- Self-righteous
- Sunbeams
- Actress Samms
- At one's wit's _; utterly frustrated

Elves could use your magic

Carol Christian

© 2012 Houston Chronicle

"Dear Santa, I'm 8 years old. I'm writing you this letter because my mother does not have a job.

No lights and me and my mom are suffering a lot. ... We do not have money to pay for rent. We do not have a car to get around. Me and my mom live alone."

Despite the letter's bleak tone, the child tells Santa she doesn't want anything but peace and a guardian angel.

"The people who help us reflect God's blessings," she wrote.

When letters like this arrive in Santa's mailbox at the North Pole, there are always elves working day jobs at the U.S. Postal Service who see them and feel compelled to answer the requests, said Dionne Montague, spokeswoman for the Postal Service's Houston district office.

This year, for the first time in Houston, members of the public can "adopt" letters or respond to children who have expressed needs, rather than the typical wish lists of kids who want everything from Beyblade spinning battle toys to iPhones.

"We had a 6-year-old ask for a bed," Montague said.

"Hopefully we'll get someone who will

step in and do that." A boy asked for winter clothes because he had only a summer wardrobe, Montague said.

"He wanted a red jacket but said, 'I'll take any color you bring.' "

Although rare, adults also write letters. A woman asked for a wheelchair for her husband, an amputee.

The letters slated for adoption are selected by a Dear Santa Committee - six postal employees who volunteer to read every request mailed to Santa Claus, with or without a stamp.

The employees pitch in with Operation Santa on their own time, getting together outside business hours to go through stacks of mail.

If a letter has a return address, the elves send a response, to let the writer know the missive made it to the North Pole.

The committee's work comes when many postal employees are already putting in 10 to 12 hours a day to accommodate the holiday mail crush, said William Mitchell, Houston district manager.

Organized by Montague, the committee includes Tara Wood, a labor relations specialist; Maria Bernal, receptionist; Festus Obi, writer; Michelle DeGomez, Web specialist and Belinda McClenon, secretary. □

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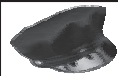


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RAF CASERT

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) —

The Commission called on legislators to back a drastic review of policy when their fisheries committee votes on the reform next Tuesday. The same day, EU nations will open a marathon negotiating session that could



Associated Press

“Europeans throughout

"The European Parliament's fisheries committee can set ambitious targets to prevent them overfishing in the future," Bellion said. □



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Report: Jackie Chan suggests Hong Kong curb rights

KELVIN CHAN
Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Jackie Chan suggests in a recent interview that protests should be restricted in the freewheeling Chinese city of Hong Kong.

The action star lamented that Hong Kong has become a city of protest, where people "scold China, scold the leaders, scold anything, protest against anything."

"There should be regulations on what can and cannot be protested," Chan told the Southern People Weekly, which published his comments Wednesday. He didn't say what kinds of protests he thought should be restricted.

The star of movies such as "Rush Hour" and "Rumble in the Bronx" triggered a backlash three years ago with similar comments on

the need to restrict freedom in his hometown. A former British colony, Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997 and is now a semiautonomous region. Residents are fiercely proud of the Western-style civil liberties they enjoy that are not seen on the mainland, including the freedom to demonstrate. Chan also reflected in the interview on how different Hong Kong was before 1997.

"Hong Kong in the British era was not so free. Did you hear so much gossip news? Were there so many taking to the streets? No. Very well behaved. The British badly repressed us," he told the magazine.

"We do not like repression. We like freedom. But you cannot do whatever you want."

The city has been the scene



Hong Kong movie star Jackie Chan poses for photographers during the charity premiere of his new movie "CZ12" in Hong Kong Thursday Dec. 13, 2012.

Associated Press

lately of a rising number of protests by people upset with Beijing-backed leader Leung Chun-ying, a lack of full democracy and China's growing influence on the city.

Tens of thousands of people took to the streets in July

to protest after Leung took office.

In 2009, Chan sparked outrage among lawmakers in Hong Kong when said he said, "I'm not sure if it's good to have freedom or not." He also said he was

"beginning to feel that we Chinese need to be controlled."

When asked by reporters later Thursday about the comments, Chan said, "I respect everyone's opinion and others should respect mine."

He added that he did not want to comment about the interview anymore.

But he added, "I will comment on politics in the future if I feel like it, because that's just the way I am."

The 58-year-old was speaking at the Hong Kong premiere of his latest movie, "Chinese Zodiac," which he has said would be his final film.

Southern People Weekly is part of a media group controlled by southern Guangdong province's Communist Party and known for its lively reporting. □



20/20

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Billboard: Adele dominates another year with '21'

NEW YORK (AP) — It's another year and another Adele domination on the music charts: The British singer is Billboard's top artist of 2012.

Billboard said Friday that Adele is the year's biggest artist and her diamond "21" album, released in February 2011, is this year's top album. Adele earned both prizes last year.

The year's top three songs are Gotye's "Somebody That I Used to Know," Carly Rae Jepsen's "Call Me Maybe" and fun.'s "We Are Young."

Adele is also the top female artist. Drake is the top male artist, One Direction is the top new artist and Maroon 5 is the year's top group.



This Feb. 12, 2012 file photo shows Adele performing during the 54th annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

Billboard said Drake, Taylor Swift, fun. and Don Omar are the top acts in the R&B/hip-hop, country, rock and Latin fields, respectively. □

Amanda Bynes enters settlement in case

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Actress Amanda Bynes has resolved a misdemeanor hit-and-run case after entering into a civil settlement with other drivers.

Court records show Bynes entered a civil compromise to end the case and her attorney informed a Los Angeles court on Thursday. Bynes was charged with leaving the scene of accidents in April and August without providing the proper information.

Defendants in certain California misdemeanor cases are allowed to enter civil settlements to resolve criminal cases.

City Attorney's spokesman Frank Mateljan says prosecutors objected to the dismissal, noting other instances in which Bynes has been cited for driving



without a license and her pending driving under the influence case.

Bynes rose to fame starring in Nickelodeon's "All That" and has also starred in several films, including 2010's "Easy A." □

'Casablanca' piano sells in NY for more than \$600K

NEW YORK (AP) — The piano used for the song "As Times Goes By" in the classic 1942 film

"Casablanca" has fetched more than \$600,000 at auction.

The 58-key upright was sold

to an unidentified buyer for \$602,500 at Sotheby's New York on Friday.

Its pre-sale estimate was up to \$1.2 million.

It was offered by a Japanese collector on the film's 70th anniversary. □



This Dec. 3, 2012, photo provided by Craft Emergency Relief Fund (CERF+) Craig Nutt, left, of CERF+ is shown a damaged furnace at Pier Glass in the Red Hook neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York by artists Kevin Kutch and Kevin Scanlan, right. Scanlan is describing their attempt to dry out the furnace, which was inundated with salt water from Superstorm Sandy.

NYC artists seek help to scrub away Sandy's stains

ULA ILNYTZKY
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Superstorm Sandy was not kind to the arts community. It upended not only paintings, equipment, tools and paper, turning them into tangled and soggy heaps, but also the livelihoods of hundreds of artists who have helped make the New York area a dynamic art capital.

Six weeks after Sandy, Pier Glass, a studio of four glass blowers on an old pier in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn, remains without power. Corrosive salt water destroyed its furnace, scattered grinding and polishing tools, shattered glass, and destroyed historic prints. It had also seen some water in last year's Tropical Storm Irene, but nothing like this.

"With Irene we had a few inches," said Mary Ellen Buxton-Kutch, one of its glass artists. "That you can handle. We probably could handle four feet. But over five feet was catastrophic." Artists, galleries and lofts, many that helped bring about a renaissance in the ribbon of all-but-abandoned warehouses that

line New York's coastal areas, face tens of thousands of dollars in repairs. Though no major museums reported damage, the toll among smaller operations and individual artists is steep. In response, various institutions and foundations are offering recovery help ranging from grants to free advice on how to rehabilitate damaged works of art. Requests to the New York Foundation for the Arts for storm-related assistance total \$12 million among almost 500 artists in New York and New Jersey, nearly 90 percent of them in New York, executive director Michael Royce said. The Craft Emergency Relief Fund, or CERF+, said it has received applications from 65 artists. Pier Glass has received a grant from CERF+ and plans to seek more money from NYFA and other groups. It also plans a fundraiser even as friends have generously contributed in amounts of \$1,000 and \$1,500.

"You still have all your bills to pay even as you're getting this money," Buxton-Kutch said.

Apart from the studio, she and her husband, Kevin Kutch, were flooded out of

their house in Brooklyn's Coney Island area and have been camping out with relatives and friends ever since the Oct. 29 storm.

Even without electricity at their studio, not working is not an option. Pier Glass does large private and public commissions and work for architects and museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

"My partner has gone to another facility to rent because we're trying to stay in business as well as rebuild," said Buxton-Kutch, who estimated the studio suffered as much as \$200,000 in damage. A new furnace would cost an additional \$20,000.

The institutions that lost buildings or property include both the obscure and the well-known.

Salt water damaged some textiles and ceremonial batons at the New York City Police Museum and soaked about 60 boxes of paper archives at the New York City Opera, said Eric Pourchot, professional development director for the Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works. □

Social Science Palooza III



DAVID BROOKS

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Elections come and go, but social science marches on. Here are some recent research findings that struck my fancy.

Organic foods may make you less generous: In a study published in *Social Psychology and Personality Science*, Kendall J. Eskine had people look at organic foods, comfort foods or a group of control foods. Those who viewed organic foods subsequently volunteered less time to help a needy stranger and they judged moral transgressions more harshly. Men are dumber around women: Thijs Verwijmeren, Vera Rommeswinkel and Johan C. Karremans gave men cognitive tests after they had interacted with a woman via computer. In the study, published in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, the male cognitive performance declined after the interaction, or even after the men merely anticipated an interaction with a woman. Women inhibit their own performance: In a study published in *Self and Identity*, Shen Zhang, Toni Schmader and William M. Hall gave women a series of math tests. On some tests they signed their real name, on others they signed a fictitious name. The women scored better on the fictitious name tests, when their own reputation was not at risk. High unemployment rates may not hurt Democratic incumbents as much: In the *American Political Science Review*, John R. Wright looked at 175 midterm gubernatorial elections and four presidential elections between 1994 and 2010. Other things being equal, high unemployment rates benefit the Democratic Party. The effect is highest when Republicans are the incumbents, but even when the incumbent is a Democrat, high unemployment rates still benefit Democratic candidates. People filter language through their fingers: In a study published in the *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, Kyle Jasmin and Daniel Casasanto asked people to rate real words, fictitious words and neologisms. Words composed of letters on the right side of the QWERTY keyboard were viewed more positively than words composed of letters from the left side. We communicate, process and feel emotions by mimicking the facial expressions of the people around us: For a study in *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, Paula M. Niedenthal, Maria Augustinova and others studied young adults who had used

pacifiers as babies, and who thus could not mimic as easily. They found that pacifier use correlated with less emotional intelligence in males, though it did not predict emotional processing skills in girls. Judges are toughest around election time: Judges in Washington state are elected and re-elected into office. In a study for *The Review of Economic Statistics*, Carlos Berdejo and Noam Yuchtman found that these judges issue sentences that are 10 percent longer at their end of the political cycle than at the beginning.

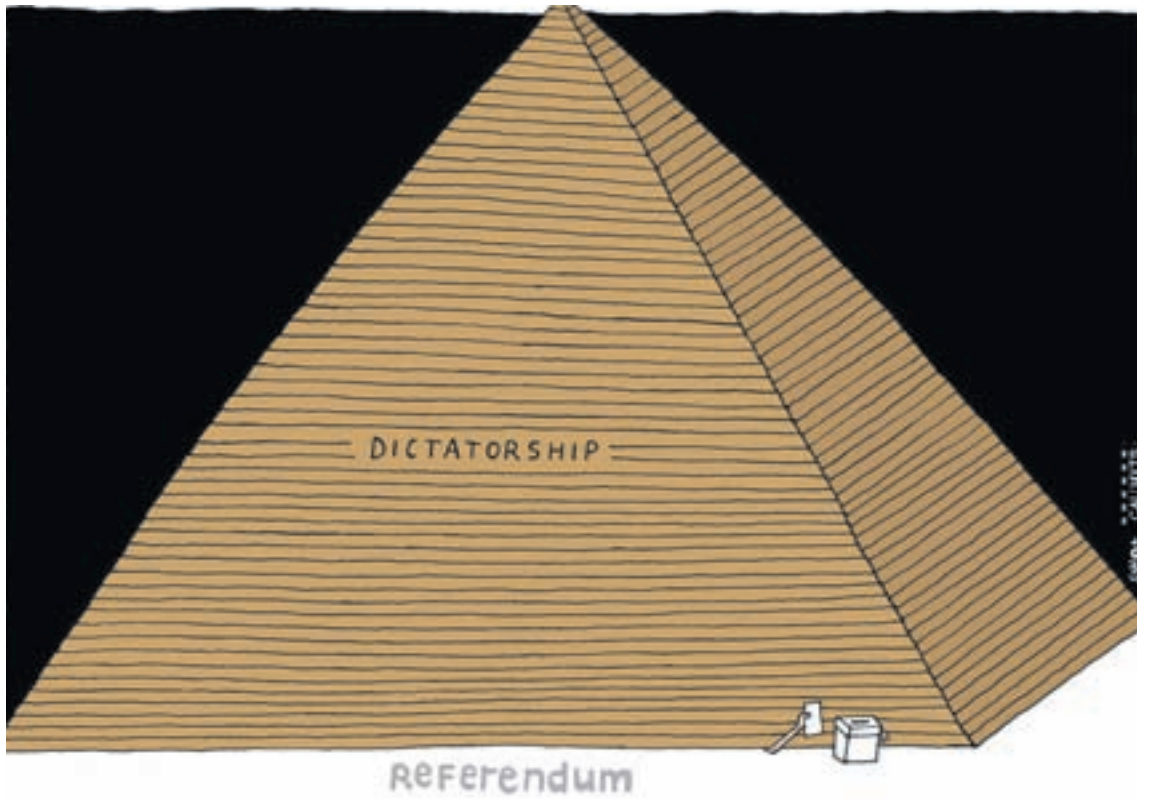
New fathers pay less: In a study for the *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Michael Dahl, Cristian Dezso and David Gaddis Ross studied male Danish CEOs before and after their wives gave birth to children. They found that male CEOs generally pay their employees less generously after fathering a child. The effect is stronger after a son is born. Female employees are less affected than male employees. CEOs also tend to pay themselves more after the birth of a child. Affluent neighborhoods challenge mental equilibrium: In a study for the *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, Terese J. Lund and Eric Dearing found that boys reported higher levels of delinquency and girls reported higher levels of anxiety and depression when they lived in affluent neighborhoods compared with middle-class neighborhoods. Boys' delinquency and girls' anxiety-depression levels were lowest when they were from affluent families living in middle-class neighborhoods.

Premarital doubts are significant: In a study in the *Journal of Family Psychology*, Justin Lavner, Benjamin Karney and Thomas Bradbury found that women who had cold feet before marriage had significantly higher divorce rates four years later.

Male premarital doubts did not correlate with more divorce.

Women use red to impress men: In a study for the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, Andrew Elliot, Tobias Greitemeyer and Adam Pazda found that women expecting to converse with an attractive man were more likely to select a red versus green shirt than women expecting to converse with an unattractive man or another woman. Birth date affects corporate success: In a study for *Economics Letters*, Qianqian Du, Huasheng Gao and Maurice Levi found that CEOs are disproportionately likely to be born in June and July.

It's always worth emphasizing that no one study is dispositive. Many, many studies do not replicate. Still, these sorts of studies do remind us that we are influenced by a thousand breezes permeating the unconscious layers of our minds. They remind us of the power of social context. They're also nice conversation starters. If you find this sort of thing interesting, you really should check out Kevin Lewis' blog at *National Affairs*. He provides links to hundreds of academic studies a year, from which these selections have been drawn. □



The God Glut



FRANK BRUNI

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Bob Kerrey's political career spanned four years as the governor of Nebraska and another 12 as a United States senator from that state, during which he made a serious bid for the Democratic presidential nomination. In all that time, to the best of his memory, he never uttered what has become a routine postscript to political remarks: "God bless America."

That was deliberate.

"It seems a little presumptuous, when you've got the land mass and the talent that we do, to ask for more," he told me recently. But there was an additional reason he didn't mention God, so commonly praised in the halls of government, so prevalent a fixture in public discourse.

"I think you have to be very, very careful about keeping religion and politics separate," Kerrey said.

We Americans aren't careful at all. In a country that supposedly draws a line between church and state, we allow the former to intrude flagrantly on the latter. Religious faith shapes policy debates. It fuels claims of American exceptionalism.

And it suffuses arenas in which its place should be carefully mea-

sured. A recent example of this prompted my conversation with Kerrey. Last week, a fourth-year cadet at West Point packed his bags and left, less than six months shy of graduation, in protest of what he portrayed as a bullying, discriminatory religiousness at the military academy, which receives public funding.

The cadet, Blake Page, detailed his complaint in an article for *The Huffington Post*, accusing officers at the academy of "unconstitutional proselytism," specifically of an evangelical Christian variety. On the phone on Sunday, he explained to me that a few of them urged attendance at religious events in ways that could make a cadet worry about the social and professional consequences of not going.

One such event was a prayer breakfast this year at which a retired lieutenant general, William G. Boykin, was slated to speak. Boykin is a born-again Christian, and his past remarks portraying the war on terror in holy and biblical terms were so extreme that he was rebuked in 2003 by President George W. Bush.

In fact his scheduled speech at West Point was so vigorously protested that it ultimately had to be canceled.

Page said that on other occasions, religious events were promoted by superiors with the kind of mass e-mails seldom used for secular gatherings.

"It was always Christian, Christian, Christian," said Page, who is an atheist.

Mikey Weinstein, an Air Force Academy graduate who presides over an advocacy group called the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, told me that more than 30,000 members of the United States military have been in contact with his organization because of concerns about zealotry in their ranks.

More than 150 of them, he said, work or study at West Point. Sev-

eral cadets told me in telephone interviews that nonbelievers at the academy can indeed be made to feel uncomfortable, and that benedictions at supposedly nonreligious events refer to "God, Our Father" in a way that certainly doesn't respect all faiths.

Is the rest of society so different? Every year around this time, many conservatives rail against the "war on Christmas," using a few dismantled nativities to suggest that America muffles worship.

Hardly. We have God on our dollars, God in our pledge of allegiance, God in our Congress. Last year, the House took the time to vote, 396 to 9, in favor of a resolution affirming "In God We Trust" as our national motto. How utterly needless, unless I missed some insurrectionist initiative to have that motto changed to "Buck Up, Beelzebub" or "Surrender Dorothy."

We have God in our public schools, a few of which cling to creationism, and we have major presidential candidates — Rick Perry, Michele Bachmann, Rick Santorum — who use God in general and Christianity in particular as cornerstones of their campaigns. God's initial absence from the Democratic Party platform last summer stirred more outrage among Americans than the slaughter in Syria will ever provoke.

God's wishes are cited in efforts to deny abortions to raped women and civil marriages to same-sex couples. In our country God doesn't merely have a place at the table. He or She is the host of the prayer-heavy dinner party. And there's too little acknowledgment that God isn't just a potent engine of altruism, mercy and solace, but also, in instances, a divisive, repressive instrument; that godliness isn't any prerequisite for patriotism; and that someone like Page deserves as much respect as any true believer. □

Toys for Tots

Christmas
is the season
of sharing and giving.

As has been the custom of Aruba Today and Bon Dia Aruba since 2003, we are again collecting toys, books, clothing for boys and girls, non-perishable food, etc. for Casa Cuna Children's House, Imeldahof and The Food Bank of Aruba.

Let's make this a Merry and Joyful Christmas for everyone on our island, as it's an opportunity for us all to show solidarity and our love to others. You too can be part of this program by bringing your gift to our office located at the Weststraat #22 in Oranjestad.

Financial contributions are also possible. Help us make this Christmas a very special one for our children and families all in Aruba. Toys for Tots thanks each and everyone of you for helping us helping others.

THANK YOU!!

Thank You